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Bass Guitar for Dummies®

2nd Edition

by Patrick Pfeiffer

Foreword by Will Lee
Bassist, *Late Show with David Letterman*

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About the Author

Patrick Pfeiffer is a professional bassist, composer, and bass teacher in New York City. He earned his bachelor's degree in music from Arizona State University and his master's degree in jazz studies from the New England Conservatory of Music, where he studied with famed bassist Miroslav Vitous. Pfeiffer's solo CD *Fruits and Nuts* (recorded with his group *Phoenix*) earned stellar reviews and a recommendation from *Bass Player Magazine.* Besides performing and recording, Pfeiffer teaches bass guitar at the renowned *Katie Agresta Studio* in New York City and gives clinics on rhythm section playing for bassists and drummers all over the U.S. His former students include Adam Clayton of U2, Jean-Louis Locas of Cirque du Soleil, Mark Wike of the Bogmen, and Alec Such of Bon Jovi. Other former clients include Red Ant Records, Polygram, and Arista Records.

Pfeiffer has played and/or recorded with George Clinton, Jimmy Norman, Phoebe Snow, Slam Steward, Paul Griffin, Bernard Purdie, Babatunde Olatunji, Sheila Jordan, George Russell, Margaret Whiting, Joe LoVano, Carlos Alomar, Hernan Romero, the Marvelettes, the KMA Allstars, and the Gary Corwin Dream Band, to name a few.

Besides *Bass Guitar For Dummies,* 2nd Edition, he is the author of two other publications for bass: *Improve Your Groove: The Ultimate Guide for Bass* (published by Hal Leonard) and *Daily Grooves for Bass* (published by Carl Fischer).

Pfeiffer is co-owner of Bass Remedies, Inc. (BassRemedies.com), a company offering live bass seminars with today's bass stars as well as Internet-based video lessons.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the love of my life, my beautiful sweetie, Lisa Ann Herth Pfeiffer.

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Foreword

For bassists or bass wannabes, *Bass Guitar For Dummies,* 2nd Edition, takes you on a tour of the instrument and explores all avenues of bassdom. Of the myriad tools available for bassists, *Bass Guitar For Dummies,* 2nd Edition, is at the pinnacle of them all. Never before has such a complete anthology been assembled. It's like having an unlimited ticket for all the rides at BassLand!

Patrick Pfeiffer, great communicator of bass guitar, has laid it all out for you to enjoy. *Bass Guitar For Dummies,* 2nd Edition, can be read laterally, literally, or "loiterily." In other words, cover to cover, in order, or at your leisure; when you have a couple of minutes, just read a page, or a chapter. It's not too deep, not too heavy, but it's all good information and a lot of fun. So dig in, and enjoy *Bass Guitar For Dummies,* 2nd Edition!

All the Bass,

Will Lee, bassist, *Late Show with David Letterman*

Introduction

Shake the earth with deep, sonorous vibrations. Be the force that relentlessly drives the music. Rumble like the ominous thunder of an approaching storm. For you, it's not enough just to be heard; you need to be *felt,* too. You need to play bass.

Imagine your favorite music without bass. It doesn't work, does it? The bass is the heartbeat of the music, the foundation for the groove, and the glue holding together all the different instruments. You can hear the music sing as it's carried along by the bass groove. You can hear the music come to life. You can feel the vibrations of those low notes — sometimes subtle and caressing, sometimes literally earthshaking — as they propel the song. The bass is the heart of it all.

Leave center stage to the other musicians — you have more important work to do. The limelight may be cool, but bassists rule!

About This Book

You can find everything you need to master the bass in *Bass Guitar For Dummies,* 2nd Edition — from the correct way to strike a note to playing a funk groove in the style of Jaco Pastorius. It's all here.

Each chapter is independent of the others. You can skip the stuff you already know and go straight to the parts that interest you without feeling lost. To find the subject you're looking for, just check out the table of contents. You also can look up specific topics in the index at the back of the book. Or you can read from front to back and build up your bass-playing skills step by step. Either way, just remember to enjoy the journey.

I structure this book so you can decide for yourself how far you want to take your skills on the instrument. As I was writing, I checked out the entrance requirements for music schools and conservatories, and I included the information that fulfills those requirements (without getting too theoretical — after all, you don't want to spend all your time theorizing . . . you want to *play*). In fact, this book goes well beyond the minimum requirements and shows you how to actually *apply* all this information to real-life bass playing. I show you how to play in different styles and how to create your own grooves and solos so you don't have to copy someone else's bass line note-for-note.

No bass guitar? No problem. This book doesn't assume you have your own bass. If you don't, just head over to Part V to find out how to choose the right bass and accessories to get started. If you already have a bass, you can start with the maintenance section in Chapter 17 and find out how to set up your instrument so it's easier to play.

You don't need to read music to figure out how to play the bass guitar. (You can unknit your eyebrows now . . . it's true.) So how can you get the information you need from this book? Here's how:

- **Look at the grids.** The grids are pictures of the notes you play on the fingerboard of the bass guitar. The grids show you where the notes are in relation to each other and which fingers you use to play them. The grids also provide you with an additional advantage: If you use the grid to finger a certain pattern of notes, you can then transfer the same pattern (fingering and all) onto any other section of the fingerboard to play the note pattern in a different key. That's why reading music isn't necessary. The notes on a page of regular music notation look completely different for each new key, but if you use the grid, you'll find that, as far as note patterns go, one size fits all.
- **Read the tablature.** *Tablature* is a shorthand notational technique that shows you which string to strike and where to hold the string down to sound a note. The short name for tablature is *tab* (just in case anyone asks).
- **Listen to the CD.** You can hear most of the exercises and grooves that are shown in the figures on the accompanying CD. You can listen to the sound of a groove, take a look at the grid and the tab, put your hand in the proper position on the fingerboard, and then reproduce the sound.

  After you master a groove, you can pan your stereo to one side to remove the sound of the bass. Then you can play the groove in the example with just the drums and the guitar (in other words, with real musicians). Or you can create your own groove in the feel and style of the example.
- **As you improve, try reading the music notation.** As you get better, you can look at the notation and begin to learn to read music. After you figure out how to play a few phrases, you quickly discover that reading music notation isn't as difficult as it's made out to be. In fact, you'll realize that it even makes your musical life easier.

Conventions Used in This Book

I use a few conventions in *Bass Guitar For Dummies,* 2nd Edition, to help keep the text consistent and make it easy to follow. Here's a list of these conventions:

- **Right hand and left hand:** Instead of saying *striking hand* and *fretting hand,* I say *right hand* for the hand that strikes the string, and *left hand* for the hand that frets the note. My apologies to left-handed players. If you're left-handed, please read *right hand* to mean *left hand,* and vice versa.
- **Up and down, higher and lower:** Moving your left hand up the neck of the bass means moving it up in *pitch* (moving your hand toward the body of the bass). Moving your left hand down the neck means moving it down in *pitch* (moving your hand away from the body). I use the same principle for the right hand. Going to the next *higher* string means playing the string that has a higher sound (the string closer to the floor). The next *lower* string is the string that has a lower sound (the string closer to the ceiling). Just think of whether the sound is higher or lower and you'll be fine.
- **Triple music notation:** In the figures, the music for the grooves and the exercises is printed with the standard music notation on top, the tablature below, and the grid next to them. You don't have to read all of them at the same time (good heavens, that would be worse than reading piano music). Simply pick the one you feel most comfortable with, and then use the others to double-check that you're playing the groove or exercise correctly. Of course, you also can listen to the CD to hear what the music is supposed to sound like.
- **The numbers:** In the text, the numbers between 1 and 8 (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8) represent notes in a chord or scale. The designation *7th,* on the other hand, refers to a particular chord, such as a major 7th chord. Finally, the distance between two notes (the interval) is called a 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and so on.

What You're Not to Read

Even though I think you should, you don't have to read every word in this book. If you're in a hurry or don't want to get technical, feel free to skip the text highlighted by the Technical Stuff icon. You don't need to read the copyright page either. Everything else you'll find plenty of use for.

Foolish Assumptions

As I wrote this book, I made one assumption about you, the reader: I assume that you want to play the bass guitar. But that's it. I don't assume anything else. No matter what style you're interested in, this book covers them all. It doesn't even matter whether you want to play a four-, five-, or six-string bass. The grids featured in this book can be used for any bass guitar, and the shapes of the patterns never change. All you have to do is read this book with an open mind, and I assure you, you'll be playing bass . . . and quickly.

Of course, you can master the bass even more quickly if you use this book in conjunction with private lessons from a bass guitar teacher. And any experience you've had playing another instrument won't go to waste, either.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized so you can get the information you need easily and quickly. For efficiency, I group the chapters into six parts, which I describe here.

Part I: The World According to Bass

If you're just beginning to play music, you'll want to start right here. Part I contains three chapters on the basics you need to know before playing. Chapter 1 tells you all about the different parts of the bass guitar (and explains why playing bass is such a brilliant idea). Chapter 2 talks about how to hold your bass, where your hands belong, and how to tune your instrument. Your first play-along songs are introduced in this chapter as well. After all, why wait? Finally, Chapter 3 shows you how to read the various notational systems used in this book (and all over the world).

Part II: The Bass-ics of Playing

Part II contains two chapters that are crucial to your bass-playing career. Chapter 4 gives you exercises for strengthening and coordinating your hands, and Chapter 5 introduces you to the world of chords and scales. In Chapter 5, you start playing real bass lines, and you find out what makes them sound "right" or "wrong."

Part III: Making the Moves, Creating the Grooves

Part III moves you into some intermediate-level material (and even some advanced-level material made easy). Chapter 6 is a cornerstone of this book, because it shows you step by step how to create a groove. Grooves are absolutely essential to bass playing. They combine rhythm and harmony. Chapter 7 introduces you to soloing and fills.

Part IV: Using the Correct Accompaniment for Each Genre

Part IV takes you on a journey of discovery through the different musical genres for bass guitar. Chapter 8 shows you how to play rock styles and Chapter 9 introduces you to swing. Chapter 10 has some funky funk, and Chapter 11 takes you around the world with some exotic styles to add to your bass repertoire. Chapter 12 explains in detail how to play grooves in odd meter. Finally, Chapter 13 demonstrates how the different genres are applied in a real-life musical situation.

Part V: Buying and Caring for Your Bass

This part is an important one because it helps you pick out your best bass friend and then keep it in tiptop shape so you can make a lifetime of music together. Chapter 14, for example, deals with selecting the right bass for your needs. Chapter 15 tells you what accessories will make your bass sound good (or sound at all). Chapter 16 leads you through the changing of the strings, and Chapter 17 explains how to set up your bass guitar and perform basic maintenance.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

Part VI contains the *For Dummies* trademark section — the Part of Tens, which provides fun and helpful information in an easy-to-access format. In Chapter 18 I provide you with a selection of ten great bass players, and in Chapter 19 I give you ten great rhythm sections (and you get to hear their style on the CD).

And don't forget the appendix! The appendix introduces the accompanying CD and explains how to use it. In the examples on the CD, a drummer and a guitarist or keyboardist accompany the bassist; so, instead of playing with a drum machine, you get to play with real musicians — a very cool experience.

Icons Used in This Book

In the margins of *Bass Guitar For Dummies,* 2nd Edition (as in all *For Dummies* books), you find icons to help you maneuver through the text. Here's what the icons mean:

This icon points out expert advice to help you become a better bassist.

Be careful! This icon helps you avoid doing damage to the instrument, yourself, or someone's ears.

Brace yourself for some technical facts and information that may come in handy some day. If you want, you can skip over this stuff — and still not miss a beat.

Certain techniques are worth remembering. Take note of the information that's highlighted with this icon.

This icon helps you better understand what you're hearing when you listen to the audio samples of the different techniques on the CD.

Where to Go from Here

Where do you go from here? Well, to Hollywood Bowl, of course! Maybe not right away . . . but hey, never give up your dream. If you don't have a bass guitar yet, skip to Chapter 14 to see what's in store for you. ("What's in store for you" . . . get it? It's the bass shopping chapter.) If you're a beginner, you have a bass guitar, and you're ready to play, skip to Chapter 2 and start getting your instrument in tune (followed by getting your hands into shape). If you're already playing bass guitar, start reading Chapter 5 with your bass guitar in hand, and then enjoy playing your way through the rest of this book.

No matter how well you currently play, this book can help you improve your skills. If you are picking up the bass for the first time, remember that bringing music into your life may well be the first step in a lifelong journey of musical enrichment. If you'd like to delve deeper into this whole bass business, please visit me at `www.bassremedies.com`.

Part I

The World According to Bass

"That's the third time tonight that's happened. They start out playing the blues, but by the end, everyone's playing a polka. I blame the new bass player from Milwaukee."

In this part . . .

Hop on board the bass train — you're in for a wild ride. This part gets you on the right track. Chapter 1 introduces you to the nuts and bolts of the bass and what each part does, and Chapter 2 shows you how to attach *your* anatomy (mostly your hands) to the bass. And finally, Chapter 3 explains the various forms of notation used in this book. So buckle your seat belt.

Chapter 1

Bass Bass-ics: What Is the Meaning of Bass?

In This Chapter

- Differentiating between bass guitars and other guitars
- Understanding the function of the bass
- Checking out the parts of a bass guitar
- Getting ready to play bass
- Building a repertoire of grooves, solos, and fills
- Experiencing different music styles
- Picking up gear for your bass-playing habit
- Taking care of your bass

The bass is the glue of rhythm and harmony — it's the heartbeat of the band! It has unique qualities that draw you to it — perhaps it's the rich, deep, mellow sound or the hypnotic rhythms. In the right hands, the bass is a tremendously powerful tool, because it gives a band its feel and attitude. The bass is at the heart of much of the music you hear today. But what exactly is the bass? What makes the bass so powerful? And how does it contribute to giving music that irresistible feel? Whether you're a raw bass recruit or a seasoned veteran, this chapter can help you answer these questions.

Discovering the Differences between the Bass and Its High-Strung Cousins

Bass guitars differ from their high-strung cousins (other guitars) in several significant ways:

- **Basses traditionally have four strings, while guitars have six.** In the 1970s, some bassists started adding strings. Nowadays you can find five- and six-string basses (and beyond), but four-stringers are still the norm.
- **Nearly all bass guitars are electric.** Other guitars come in all flavors: electric, acoustic, or a combination of the two.
- **The bass strings are an equal distance musically from each other.** The sound of each bass string is tuned an equal distance from the string above it, making the instrument perfectly symmetrical. So if you play a scale starting on one string, you can use the same fingering to play that same scale starting on a different string. This type of tuning makes playing the bass much easier than playing the guitar, where the second-highest string is tuned differently from the others.
- **The bass has a lower pitch than the guitar.** The deep notes of the bass fill the lower end of the sound spectrum. Think of these notes as the "bass-ment," or foundation, of music.
- **The bass's neck is longer than the guitar's, thus making its strings longer.** The longer the string, the lower the pitch; the shorter the string, the higher the pitch. Think of a Chihuahua and a Saint Bernard, for example. The Chihuahua has short vocal chords, and a rather high-pitched bark; the Saint Bernard . . . well . . . you get the idea.
- **The bass player and the guitarist serve different functions.** I won't bore you with the guitarist's job description, but the bass player's makes for fascinating reading, as the next section shows. By the way, if you *do* happen to want to know more about the guitarist's job description, you can check out *Guitar For Dummies,* 2nd Edition, by Mark Phillips and Jon Chappell (Wiley).

Understanding the Bass Player's Function in a Band

As the bassist, you play the most crucial role in a band (at least in my opinion). Everyone in the group follows your subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) lead. If the guitarist or saxophonist makes a mistake, hardly anyone will notice, but if the bassist makes a mistake, everyone in the band and the audience will instantly know that something is wrong.

Making the link between harmony and rhythm

You're responsible for linking the harmony (chords) of a song with a distinctive rhythm (groove). This link contributes to the *feel* (emotion) and *genre* (general style) of the music. Feel and genre determine whether a song is rock, jazz, Latin, or anything else. Chapter 6 tells you exactly what you need to do to establish excellent grooves, and Part IV discusses the different musical genres you're likely to play. You want to be able to emulate any bassist's style in any genre and, at the same time, be creative — using your own notes and ideas!

Moving the song along

Every song is made up of chords that are particular to that song, and all the notes in the song relate to the sounds of those chords (see Chapter 5 for more information about chords). In some songs, all the chords are the same, from beginning to end, and so all the notes relate to that one chord sound, making such songs easy to play. The chords of most songs, however, change as the song progresses. In these songs, the first group of notes in the tune relates to the first chord and has one kind of sound; the next group of notes relates to another chord sound; and so on throughout the song.

By playing notes that are related to the chords of a song, one note at a time and in a precise rhythm, the bassist propels the music along. You set up each chord for the other players in your band by choosing notes that lead smoothly from one chord sound to the next.

REMEMBER

Good music creates a little tension, which then leads to a satisfying release of that tension (a resolution). For example, you can feel the tension and release in as simple a tune as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." The tension builds as you sing the first line: "Twinkle, twinkle, little star." Can you end the song right there? No, because you want to hear how it ends. That's the tension. When you finish singing "How I wonder what you are," you feel a resolution to the tension, a sense of coming home. You can end the song there; in fact, that's how it does end. The bassist plays an important role in creating and releasing tension. You're pretty much in the driver's seat!

Keeping time

Keeping a steady beat, or a *pulse,* is one of the bassist's primary functions. I refer to this function as *locking in with the drummer,* because you work closely with the drummer to establish the rhythm. So be nice to your drummers. Listen to them carefully and know them well. And while the two of you are on such cozy terms, spend some time together reading what Chapter 3 has to say about rhythm.

Nothing works better than a *metronome* to help you develop an unfailing sense of time. The steady (and sometimes infuriating) click that emanates from it provides an ideal backdrop for your own precise note placement, be it on or off the beat. You can find out more about the metronome in Chapter 3.

Establishing rhythms

As a bassist, you need to have a clear understanding of exactly how the rhythm relates to the beat. You need to know where to place the notes for the groove in relation to the beat. And you want to make your grooves memorable (see Chapter 6 for more about how to create memorable grooves). If you can't remember them, no one else will be able to either — including the listener (who, of course, makes the trip to hear you play).

Looking cool

While the guitarists move through their aerobic exercises on stage, dripping with sweat and smashing their guitars, you get to be cool. You can join in with their antics if you want, but have you ever seen footage of The Who? John Entwistle was cool. And, if you ever get a chance to see U2, check out their bassist, Adam Clayton. He's one cool cucumber. Great bassists are just too busy creating fabulous bass lines to join in the antics of their band mates.

Dissecting the Anatomy of a Bass Guitar

You can call it a bass guitar, an electric bass, an electric bass guitar, or just a bass. You hear all these labels when you discuss music and musical instruments — and you may encounter individuals who believe that only one of these labels is correct. But it really doesn't matter which term you choose, because they all refer to the same instrument.

Figure 1-1 shows you a picture of the bass guitar (or whatever you prefer to call it), with all its main parts labeled.

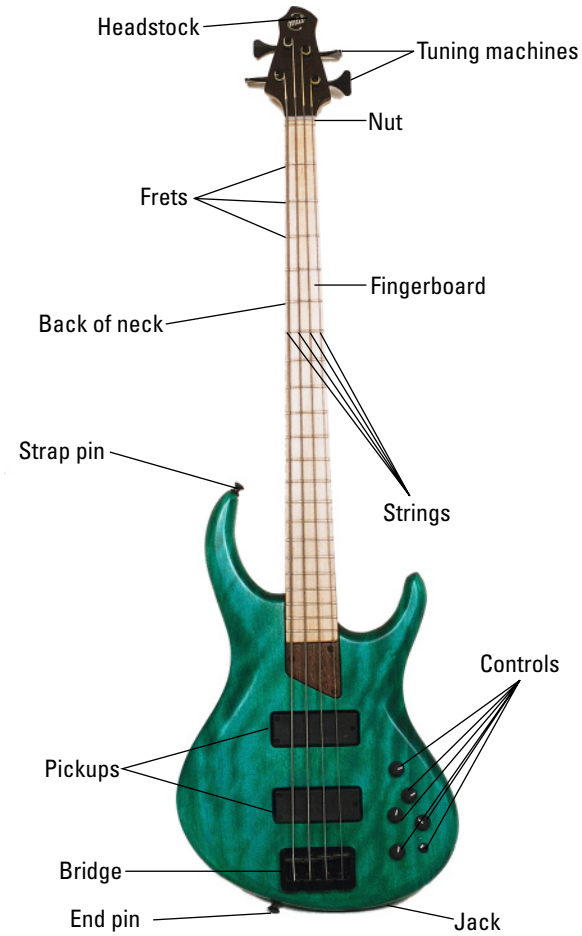


Figure 1-1: The bass guitar in all its glory.

You can divide the bass into three sections: The neck, the body, and the innards. The different parts of the neck and the body are easy to see, but the innards aren't so obvious. You have to remove the cover (or covers) to get at the innards, but knowing why they're there is important.

The neck

The neck of the bass guitar falls under the dominion of the fretting hand (usually the left hand). The following list describes the function of each part of the neck:

- **The headstock:** The headstock is the top of the neck. It holds the tuning machines for the strings.

- **The tuning machines:** The tuning machines (also called *tuners* or *tuning heads*) hold the ends of the strings. (The other ends are anchored at the bridge on the body; see the next section for more info about the body of the bass.) By turning the individual tuning heads, you can increase or decrease the tension of the strings (which raises or lowers the pitch).
- **The nut:** The nut is a small piece of wood, plastic, graphite, or brass that provides a groove for each string. It forms one end of the vibrating length of the string.
- **The fingerboard:** The fingerboard is the flat side of the neck, beneath the strings, that holds the frets.
- **The frets:** The frets are the thin metal strips that are embedded, perpendicular to the strings, along the length of the fingerboard. They determine the pitch (sound) of the note that's played. Frets are arranged in *half steps* (the smallest unit of musical distance from one note to the next). When a string is pressed against a fret, the string's vibrating length, and thus its pitch, is changed.
- **The strings:** Strictly speaking, the strings aren't part of your bass, because you remove and replace them periodically. However, your bass would be absolutely useless without them (except maybe as a "bass-ball" bat). The strings are connected to the tuning machines at one end and to the bridge at the other. The vibration of the strings produces the sound of your bass.
- **The back of the neck:** The back of the neck refers to the part of the neck that the thumb of your fretting hand rests on. The fingerboard is attached to the front of the neck. The neck and the fingerboard usually are two separate pieces of wood, but not always.

The body

The body of the bass guitar falls under the dominion of the striking hand (usually the right hand). The following list describes the function of each part of the body:

- **The pickups:** The pickups consist of magnets that are embedded in a plastic bar that lies underneath and perpendicular to the strings. You can have two magnets for each string, or one long magnet for all the strings. The magnets form a magnetic field, and the vibration of the string disturbs (or *modulates*) that field. This modulation is then translated into an electric signal, which in turn is converted into sound by the amplifier and speaker.

- **The controls:** The controls are the knobs used for adjusting the volume and tone (bass and treble) of the pickups. They're located toward the lower end of your bass (when you have it strapped on).
- **The bridge:** The strings are attached to the body at the bridge. The bridge holds one end of each string and is located at the end of the body. Modern pickups, such as piezo pickups or lightwave pickups, are sometimes installed inside the bridge. These pickups read the vibration of the string at the bridge.
- **The strap pin:** The strap pin is the metal knob on the body near the neck, where you attach one end of your shoulder strap (usually the thick end).
- **The end pin:** The end pin is the metal knob on the bottom end of the body (by the bridge) where you attach the thin end of your shoulder strap.
- **The jack:** The jack (also called the *input jack*) is the socket used for connecting the cord from your bass to the amplifier (for more on amplifiers, see Chapter 15).

The innards

The innards aren't visible to the eye (they're hidden in the cavity of the instrument and covered with plates), but they're essential to the sound and feel of the bass guitar. The following list describes the innards of the bass guitar:

- **The truss rod:** The *truss rod* is an adjustable metal rod that runs the length of your bass guitar's neck. The truss rod controls the curvature of the neck and fingerboard and keeps them stable. If you need to make adjustments to it, you can reach it through the top or bottom of the neck.
- **The electronics:** The electronics of a bass guitar are a collection of wires, "pots" (short for *potentiometers,* or electronic capacitors, the round devices connected to the inner side of a volume knob), and other important-looking electronic items that help convert the vibration of the string into sound. The cavity for the electronics usually is located under a plate on the back of your bass guitar's body. It also may be located under the control knobs on the front of your bass.
- **The batteries:** If your bass has *active electronics* (electronics with their own power source), you have one or two 9-volt batteries attached to the electronics (via some wires). These batteries are located in the same cavity as the electronics or in an adjacent cavity on the back of the body. If your bass has *passive electronics* (electronics with no batteries), you don't have to worry about replacing batteries.

On a Need-to-Know "Basses": Gearing Up to Play Bass

Getting yourself ready to play — both physically (with exercises) and mentally (with theory) — is essential to being a good bass player. You also have to prepare your instrument by tuning it and by playing it correctly. When you play the bass guitar correctly, your fingers can move with ease from note to note.

Coordinating your right and left hands

Because you play the bass with two hands — one hand striking and the other fretting (no, it's not worried!) — both hands have to be well coordinated with each other. With the exercises in Chapter 4, you can warm up your hands on a daily basis (just like an athlete warms up before a sporting event).

Mastering major and minor chord structures

Two basic tonalities prevail in music: major and minor. Each tonality has a distinctive sound. Major sounds somewhat *happy* or *bright,* whereas minor sounds *sad* or *dark.* Musicians use these sounds to express the mood of the song (or themselves, for that matter).

As a bassist, you have a unique advantage: The bass is perfectly symmetrical, and all the fingering patterns remain intact no matter where you play them on the neck. Any major or minor chord will always *feel* the same to your fingers, because the pattern of notes doesn't change. Each fret on the neck equals one half step, the smallest *musical interval* (distance between two notes). The sound of each string is exactly five half steps from the sound of the next lower string . . . no exceptions! Chapter 5 tells you all about these patterns.

TIP

Because all your chords and scales fall into consistent patterns that you can play anywhere on the neck, the question becomes, "Where do you start the pattern?" Chapter 3 guides you through this process with ease.

Tuning your bass

Tuner and *bass* . . . sounds almost like a fishing expedition, but fishing for the right note is the last thing you want to do when tuning your bass. Your bass needs to be in tune with the other instruments as well as with itself. Chapter 2 explains several different methods for tuning your bass just right.

Combining scales and chords

Scales and chords form the backbone of music. Here's a brief rundown on each of these:

- *Scales* are groups of notes (usually seven) used to create tunes.
- *Chords* are three or four specific notes within a scale that form the harmonic (musical) content.

As a bassist, you use scales together with chords to form your bass lines (or grooves). Using both scales and chords gives you flexibility to express your individuality (see Chapter 5 for details). You often can spice up your bass lines by choosing from several corresponding scales.

Playing Grooves, Solos, and Fills

Being able to play grooves is essential to being a good bassist. After all, the grooves you play determine the harmonic *and* the rhythmic content of a song. Is it a wonder that good bassists are the most sought-after musicians?

Creating grooves and riffs

Certain elements are essential for the creation of grooves and riffs (Chapters 6 and 7 tell you all about these elements). Grooves have a rhythmic content (groove skeleton) and a harmonic content (a chord and scale). *Riffs* are a short melody that you can play to fill a space in the music.

A bassist will often play a groove in the lower octave and then add a riff in the higher octave to give his bass line variety and to keep listeners interested. Creating grooves and riffs isn't just a matter of divine inspiration (although that never hurts); it's actually dictated by science.

Treating yourself and your audience with solos and fills

As a bassist, your job is to play the groove. But that doesn't mean you have to restrain yourself from playing tasty solos and fast-fingered fills. As long as your solo or *fill* (miniature solo) relates to the groove and is indeed part of it, you can play them to your heart's desire.

When you need a very cool solo, or you need to fill some space with bass *flash* (a fancy mini-solo to show off your skills), the blues scales and pentatonic scales are hard to beat, especially if you play them in a higher octave. Whether you're playing blues, rock, jazz, or anything in between, these scales, when properly applied, will never let you down. You benefit from the symmetry of the bass: One fingering fits all! (Refer to Chapter 7 for the lowdown on these scales and on fills and solos.)

Experimenting with Different Musical Genres

Defining the genre of a tune is your primary function as a bassist. You define a genre by the notes and rhythms you choose — and you have to do this while locking in with the drums! In this section, I show you some of the common genres plus some tips to make you feel comfortable playing outside your genre of specialty.

A musical *genre* is an overall type of music, such as world beat. A musical *style* is a subcategory of a genre, such as reggae or West-African music (which are considered world beat styles).

The following list defines the genres you'll encounter most often:

- **Rock:** A lot of styles are part of this encompassing genre. Among them are pop, rock, rock 'n' roll, fusion, and even country. The rock styles are generally played with a steady eighth-note pulse (two eighth notes per beat) tightly locked with the drums, which drives the song. I provide a broad selection of *templates* (note and rhythm suggestions for each style) for you to choose from, and I hope that you expand on them for your own playing — just take a peek at Chapter 8 and rock on!
- **Swing:** Swing styles are based on the triplet feel. With the *triplet,* a single beat is subdivided into three equal units, not the usual two. The styles in this genre are somewhat lighter than the rock styles, and they include the shuffle as well as the walking bass lines. Shuffle off to Chapter 9 to find out more about swing.
- **Funk:** The funk styles rely heavily on the sixteenth note, the smallest rhythmic subdivision commonly used in music. For bassists, this is the busiest genre. You have lots of notes to play. You need to lock in firmly with the drums and keep the groove tight. This genre focuses a lot of attention on the bass and is usually a technical challenge. So check out Chapter 10 and get your fingers ready to play some intricate stuff.
- **World beat:** World beat is a widely recognized category in almost any music store. I use this term to describe styles that aren't native to North American

music but are relatively common, such as South American, African, and Caribbean styles. This book prepares you for the most common world beat styles, but bear in mind that many more international styles are out there waiting to be explored. For more on the world beat genre, see Chapter 11.

- **Odd meters:** Styles using odd meters aren't part of the regular four-beat patterns you may be used to, but meters that use five, six, or seven beats (and beyond) are definitely part of the odd meter family. Although unusual, odd meters can sound quite natural when played correctly. In fact, the waltz (three beats to the measure) is an odd meter style that arguably feels very natural because it's so common. Chapter 12 tells you how to play odd meters smoothly.

TIP

Say, for example, that you want to play jazz, but your friends want to play rock 'n' roll. How do you create a bass groove that sounds authentic and fits the bill? Chapter 13 shows you the ins and outs of the main musical groove genres so you can satisfy any requirements your bandmates impose on you without sounding like a jazz-head *trying* to play rock 'n' roll.

Stocking Up On Some Bass Gear

So many basses, so little time. Well, maybe you have a lot of time, but the fact remains: You have a lot of different basses to choose from, and new ones are coming onto the market all the time. You need to know what to look and listen for. You also should know what other gear you need in order to fulfill your *bass* desires.

Buying a bass

Some basses offer a specific sound, and others offer an array of different sounds suitable for many different styles of music. Of course, you want to choose a bass that you can play comfortably. Okay, your bass should also look cool, but remember: Looks are only varnish deep. Chapter 14 helps you with the entire bass-buying (or is it *bass-adoption?*) process.

Getting an amplifier

How much power do you need? How is the sound? Can you carry everything yourself, or will you need half a dozen burly roadies to budge the amp and speaker? Check out Chapter 15 for help with these questions. Oh, and speaking of "budge" . . . how big is your budget? How much money you have to spend is another consideration when thinking about purchasing an amp.

Accessorizing your bass

You need to carry some items in your bass bag at all times, such as a strap, tuner, and cables. Other items are optional, such as a chorus unit or fancy stickers for your fans. Chapter 15 helps you determine which accessories you need and which you don't. Think about whether you can perform without an item. If you can, it's optional; and if you can't, it's a necessity.

Giving Your Bass Some Good Old TLC

Even though your bass requires very little maintenance, certain parts need an occasional adjustment or periodic replacement. You can do a lot of maintenance yourself, with a minimal complement of basic tools. Check out Chapters 16 and 17 to guide you through this process.

Changing the strings

Changing the strings is the most common bass maintenance. How often you change the strings depends on how clear you want your sound to be — the newer the strings, the brighter the sound. Whatever you do, *please* don't listen to the stories about bassists who change their strings every 25 years (and then only because one broke).

Change your strings *at least* every three to six months (more often if you play a lot). And be sure to wash your hands before you play (sounds funny, doesn't it?) to keep dirt from your hands off your strings. For more info on changing your strings, see Chapter 16.

Cleaning your bass

Obviously, you can't just take a garden hose and power-wash your bass. Your bass, like any other musical instrument, is very delicate. You need to handle it carefully when removing the soda stains from your last performance (cigarette burns are even more difficult). Cotton swabs and fine cloths are in order. Head to Chapter 17 for the complete lowdown on cleaning your bass.

Chapter 2

Gaining the Tools and Skills to Play

In This Chapter

- Holding your bass properly
- Positioning your right and left hands
- Finding out how to read a fingerboard diagram
- Getting your bass in tune
- Practicing your first song with your bass

In this chapter, you tackle the basics of playing the bass: How to hold your instrument, how to position your hands, how to read a fingerboard diagram, how to tune your bass, and how to play a song with your bass. So roll up your sleeves and get ready to dive in.

Getting a Handle on Your Bass

Before getting started, let me clarify some terminology. I refer to *right hand* and *left hand* in this book, but what really matters is what each hand does:

- The right hand is your *striking* hand; that is, it strikes (or plucks) each string and puts it into motion to produce a sound.
- Your left hand is your *fretting* hand; it presses the strings onto the fret to settle on a pitch.

If you're left-handed, and you decide to play your bass as a lefty, apply the instructions for your right hand to your left hand, and vice versa.

Frets are the small metal strips that are embedded in the neck of your bass, underneath the strings. You usually have between 20 and 24 frets on your bass. To fret a note, you press the string onto the neck between two frets

with your left hand. For instance, to play a string at the 3rd fret, you press your finger between the 2nd and 3rd frets, closer to the 3rd. Take a look at Figure 2-1 to see the proper way to fret a note on the 3rd fret.

Figure 2-1: Fretting a note.

Holding Your Bass

In this chapter, you finally get to wear your bass, which, after wading through the preliminaries in Chapter 1, is a welcome change.

REMEMBER

If you watch other bass players, either live or on television, you may notice an array of ways to hold a bass. Some definitely look cooler than others, but you may have difficulty playing with a proper hand position when the instrument is either scraping along your ankles or creeping up around your chin. Compromise is the name of the game here.

Strapping on your bass: Strings to the outside

When you strap on your bass for the first time, I recommend that you sit down to do it. Adjusting the strap is easier this way. Ideally, the strings of the bass should cross between your belt line and your belly button at a slight

angle upward (up on the neck end). This position ensures optimum right- and left-hand coverage, and it works well regardless of whether you're standing or sitting. Oh, and yes, the strings should face the outside!

Strapping on and adjusting a bass eventually becomes as natural as riding a bike, but when you first start out, you have to follow some basic instructions to get it right. If your left hand is strained when playing, try raising the height of the bass. If your right hand feels uncomfortable, try lowering the bass.

You can achieve the ideal compromise position for both your left and right hands by following these steps:

1. **Attach the thick end of your strap to the *strap pin* (the little metal knob) on the body at the neck end of the bass.**
2. **Attach the thin end of your strap to the bottom strap pin (also called the *end pin*) of the bass.**
3. **Hold your bass solidly by the body or the neck with your left hand, and pull the strap over your head and right shoulder, putting your right arm through as well.**

   Allow the strap (with the bass attached) to rest on your left shoulder and continue across your back until it connects with the bottom strap pin of the bass just below the right side of your rib cage.
4. **Adjust your strap in length until the strings are in the area between your belly button and belt buckle, and then fine-tune it from there.**

   You can find your own personal preference, but you want your bass to rest in this general area. Take a look at Figures 2-2 and 2-3 and note that the general position of the bass is the same whether you're standing or sitting.

Voilà! Standing with your bass

And now, get on your feet! The time has come to take a stand with your bass. Here's how:

1. **Make sure your strap is securely attached to the strap pins.**

   Also, make sure your strap is straight, not twisted from one end to the other.
2. **Let your bass hang loosely from your shoulder.**

   Keep your left hand underneath the neck, but don't clutch it. Some basses are a little neck-heavy and others are perfectly balanced. No matter what type of bass you have, you need to get used to the feel of it.

3. **Position your hands on the bass.**

   Your left hand should be free to roam the neck from top to bottom without having to hold the bass. Your right hand should be able to reach all the strings comfortably.

The standing position will most likely be your live or performance position (see Figure 2-2).

Figure 2-2: Standing with your bass.

Sitting with your bass

During those endless hours of practice, you may want to sit down to play (see Figure 2-3). I recommend using a stool or a tall chair without armrests. That way, the position of your bass is similar whether you're standing or sitting. In addition, you want your thighs to be at least parallel to the floor; try to sit so they're higher than your knees, if possible.

After you sit down, keep the strap on. You may feel a slight slack in the strap when the bass touches your thighs, but it should still hold the bass in place. Your left hand needs to be free to roam across the neck without your having to worry about holding the bass in place, and your right hand must be able to reach all the strings comfortably.

Figure 2-3: Sitting with your bass.

Placing Your Hands in the Proper Position

The secret to getting your hands into position is simple: Keep them loose and relaxed. You want to strike and fret the strings with the least amount of effort possible. The proper position enables you to play at great speed and with great accuracy. It also helps you control your tone.

Positioning your left hand

You want your left hand to cover one fret per finger without causing any undue stress in your hand. By using one finger per fret, you set up your hand to execute almost any musical figure without *shifting,* or moving your hand position to reach a note. (A *figure* is an independent and self-contained musical phrase, sort of like a sentence when you're speaking.)

When you do have to shift, a move of one fret in either direction usually suffices. Check out Figure 2-4 for the proper left-hand position, and follow these steps to accomplish it:

1. **Hold out your left hand with your outstretched arm in front of you.**

   Keep your wrist and hand limp.

2. **Without changing the angle on your wrist, turn your hand over so that your palm faces up and your fingers are slightly curved.**

   Position your thumb so that it faces your index finger (or the area between your index and middle fingers).

3. **Bring in your elbow to the side of your rib cage (without moving your hand) until the neck of your bass is in the palm of your hand.**

   Remember not to close your hand!

4. **Place the tip of your thumb on the middle of the back of the neck of the bass.**

   Make sure that your fingertips are pointing upward.

5. **Gently spread your fingers onto the strings, with each finger close to an adjacent fret.**

6. **Curl your fingers until your fingertips are on one of the strings.**

   Be sure to keep the tips of your fingers close to the frets.

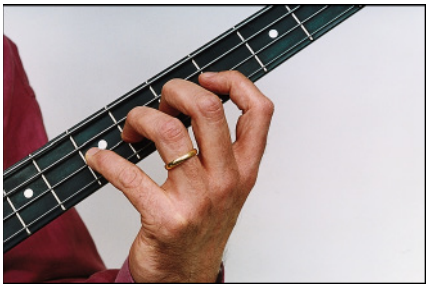


Figure 2-4: Position of the left hand.

Now you're just about ready to press the string to the fret to play a note. Even though you can now fret the desired note, something still has to set the string in motion to produce the actual sound. This is where your right hand comes in. Read on for details.

Positioning your right hand

You may see several popular right-hand techniques; so many, in fact, that they could fill a book all on their own. In this book, I concentrate on the *finger-style* technique, which is the most flexible and widely used technique, covering virtually all styles of music. This technique also allows you to work more efficiently with *dynamics* (accenting certain notes). In this section, I

also show you the proper positions for the *pick* technique and *slap* (thumb) technique.

I refer to the right hand as the striking hand rather than as the plucking or pulling hand. The other terms are technically correct, but I prefer the term *striking* because *plucking* and *pulling* imply that you should pull the strings away from the body of the bass, which produces a thin sound. Instead, you need to strike the string *into* the body of the bass, not *away from* it.

Finger-style playing

The name *finger-style* refers to your striking the strings with the index and middle fingers of your right hand. You can hear this style in country, rock, jazz, and funk — and just about any other type of music. Jaco Pastorius, James Jamerson, and Francis Rocco Prestia are only three of the multitude of bassists who use this technique. Take the following steps to set up your hand properly. Then compare the position of your hand to Figure 2-5.

Figure 2-5: Right hand in the proper finger-style position.

1. **Bring your right arm up, as though you're pointing to something in the distance, while keeping your wrist, hand, and fingers relaxed.**

   Keep your wrist at a 45-degree angle (approximately), keep your thumb facing your index finger, and keep your fingers gently curved, with your fingertips pointing to the floor.

2. **Start bending your elbow slowly, keeping it just slightly away from your rib cage.**

3. **Let your hand approach the instrument until your thumb settles onto the *thumb rest* (a plastic or wood bar for resting your thumb on) or the *pickup* (the magnetic bars that pick up the string vibration).**

   Keep your elbow next to your body, not behind it.

4. **Settle the weight of your arm onto your thumb.**

   This position may take some time to get used to, but it keeps your hand and shoulder in their most relaxed state. The thumb acts as a measuring device for your fingers and the individual strings. With this position, you can feel which string you're playing instead of having to look to see where you are.

5. **Reach for your high string with your index or middle finger (see Figure 2-6).**

Figure 2-6: Hand reaching for the high string.

Your thumb has to bend a little more, and your hand must pivot out on it to reach the highest string.

The terms *high string* and *low string* refer to the sound of the strings, not to the position of your hand. Your high string is actually the string closest to your feet, whereas your low string is closest to your head.

6. **Reach for your lowest string.**

   Your thumb is now straighter. Your hand pivots on the resting thumb, toward your body, and your palm is closer to the body of the bass, as shown in Figure 2-7.

Figure 2-7: Hand reaching for the low string.

Pick-style playing

Some players prefer to use a *pick* (a small triangular plastic piece, about the size of a quarter) to produce a note instead of using their fingers. Because the strings on a bass are much heavier than on a guitar, your bass pick needs to be heavier as well.

You can hold the pick in one of two ways: closed or open. To set your hand properly for closed-hand pick playing, following these steps:

1. **Hold your pick between your index finger and thumb.**
2. **Make a light fist and rest your thumb on top of your index finger.**
3. **Slide your index finger along the bottom of your thumb until it reaches the first knuckle of your thumb.**

   This is where the pick goes, with only the tip of it showing. See Figure 2-8.

From Carol Kaye to Paul McCartney: A brief primer on famous pick players

Pick-style playing was a popular technique in the early days of the bass guitar (the 1950s and 1960s, which is, perhaps, not so early for you). Many first-generation players switched from guitar to bass and brought the pick along with them. Joe Osborn and Carol Kaye, two Los Angeles studio musicians, are examples of former guitarists who continued to use a pick to play their bass guitars. The sharp attack of the pick brought new levels of clarity and definition to the notes they played. In the process, it also shattered the belief (previously held by producers and engineers, who were used to the upright bass) that the bass should be felt and not heard. This helped the bass guitar gain worldwide acceptance. Joe Osborn can be heard on many of The Fifth Dimension's hits, such as "Aquarius/Let The Sunshine In." Carol Kaye played on a lot of the Beach Boys' hits, including "Good Vibrations."

If you search the Internet for info on these two famous bassists, you'll find that they both played some great bass lines on a lot of famous tunes. I have links for these and other great players on `www.sourkrautmusic.com` for you to explore. A great *bass line* is a bass part that propels and builds the tune, has a unique quality that defines the tune, and doesn't get in the way of the melody and vocals. Think about "Come Together" by one of the most famous pick players, Paul McCartney, the bass player for the Beatles. Paul single-handedly (actually, he used both hands and a pick) brought the bass to the foreground in popular music, inventing some of the most memorable bass lines along the way. When you listen to his bass lines in "Penny Lane," or "Day Tripper," or the incredible "Something," you become more aware of the crucial role the bass plays in modern music.

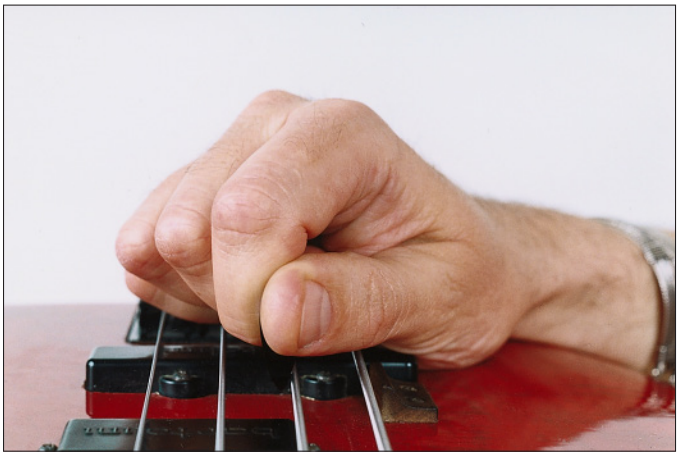


Figure 2-8: Holding the pick in a closed-hand position.

You also can try playing with an open hand (see Figure 2-9). The pick still goes between your thumb and index finger, but you leave a space between your fingers and your palm. You may like the increased control you get when you rest your ring finger and pinkie against the body of the bass. Both styles require you to make a twisting wrist movement with your picking hand.

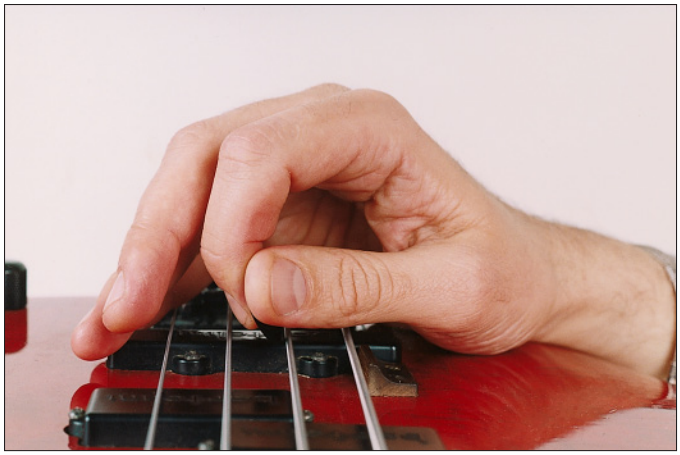


Figure 2-9: A pick in the open-hand style.

With a pick, you can strike the string from either above or below. Some players prefer only downstrokes; others use only upstrokes. Still other players combine the two strokes for an even faster technique. Feel free to experiment and find out which technique suits your musical style.

Pick playing isn't an *aural* (or acoustic) necessity anymore. Technology has caught up, and I assure you that your bass will be heard equally well without a pick. However, in the age of music videos, pick playing is preferred for its visual impact. You can really see the bass player working when he or she is using a pick.

Slap-style playing

The technique behind *slap style* or *thumb style* is to strike a low string with the side of your thumb, giving it a *percussive sound* (a sharp attack and decay of the note, like a drum), and then to *snap* (or pop) a high string with your index finger. Here's how you do it:

1. **Make a light fist with your right hand.**

   Lift your thumb away from your fist as though you were hitchhiking.

2. **Loosen up on your index finger and create a hook.**

   Your index finger should look like it's pulling the trigger of a gun.

3. **Rest your forearm on the body of the bass so that your right hand hovers above the strings.**

4. **With a sharp twist of your wrist, flick your thumb against one of the low strings, striking it at the very end of the fingerboard.**

   This creates the slap sound. Lots of wrist movement is required for this style. Figure 2-10 (see left side of figure) shows you how to do it correctly.

Popular slappers and thumbers

Slap style became popular in the 1970s and 1980s. Larry Graham (Sly and the Family Stone, and Graham Central Station) was one of the first slappers, and players such as Stanley Clarke and Louis Johnson continued to expand the technique. Marcus Miller, Flea (Red Hot Chili Peppers), and Victor Wooten (Béla Fleck and the Flecktones) are some of today's popular thumbers.

5. **Hook your index finger under a high string, and with an opposing twist of your wrist, snap the string against the fret board.**

   Make sure your thumb continues *past* the string and onto the fingerboard so the string is free to vibrate and the note rings. Figure 2-10 (see right side of figure) shows you how to do it.

Figure 2-10: Thumb striking the string (left), and index finger snapping the string (right).

WARNING!

Don't pull too hard on the high string, or you may break it. Only a small amount of force is required.

Reading a Fingerboard Diagram

In some situations, musicians are required to read music and even play the exact note written on a chart, or page of music. (I give you the basics of reading music in Chapter 3.) However, most bassists prefer to create their own accompaniment for a given tune. They think of the selection of notes as a picture. Using a fingerboard diagram (or grid) is a great way to see such pictures.

The language of music: Scales and chords

Musicians use a *scale,* an orderly ascending or descending sequence of notes, to create their music. The most commonly used scales have seven notes, beginning with the *root* (the first note). The eighth note in the sequence sounds similar to the root, but it's actually an *octave* (a higher root). A *chord* is a combination of three or more notes taken from a scale. (I cover both scales and chords in more detail in Chapter 5.)

You don't have to read music to play bass; music isn't a visual art — it's an aural art. You hear it. Some of my favorite bassists can't read a note and still manage to come up with incredible bass parts. Most bass players, however, find that reading music is a useful skill when playing with other people. Some band leaders require you to read music.

Music often is written on paper so it can be communicated to others. And the same note can appear on paper in several different ways. One way is with the *fingerboard diagram,* or *grid,* that I often use to show you the positions of the different scales and chords on the bass neck. The grid is simply a picture of the bass neck. Check out Figure 2-11 for a picture of two grids. One shows four strings and the other shows only three. Often you only need three strings to execute a musical move, so you really don't need to see that fourth string.

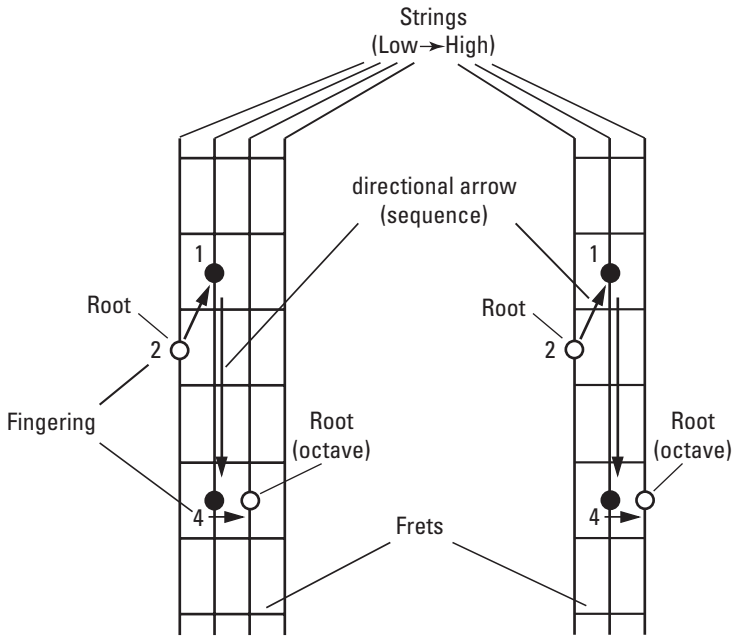


Figure 2-11: Description of the parts of two different grids.

A grid is composed of the following elements:

- **The vertical lines represent the strings, from low (left) to high (right).** Because you often can play one complete scale (one octave) or chord using only three strings, one of the grids has only three strings, even though your bass has at least four strings. The beauty of this system is that you can apply the grid to any part of the bass, as long as you have enough strings and frets to work with.
- **The horizontal lines in the grid represent the frets.**
- **The solid black dots and the open circle represent notes to be played.** The open circle is the *root,* or *tonal center.* The root is the most important note in a scale or chord, and it's usually the first note you play. (I cover these terms and concepts in detail in Chapter 5.)
- **The numbers next to the dots tell you which finger you use to play the note, as follows:**

  1 = index finger (the pointer)

  2 = middle finger (well, never mind)

  3 = ring finger

  4 = pinkie (little finger)
- **The arrows from dot to dot indicate the sequence of the notes to be played (if there is a specific sequence).** On the bass, you almost always play one note at a time.

The four-finger technique I describe in the preceding list can help you play everything with the least amount of effort, the fewest shifts, and the greatest level of consistency. Using the same fingering time after time when playing the same scale or chord is essential for developing speed and accuracy and for smooth playing. In other words, keeping your fingering consistent helps your hand become familiar with the moves and builds muscle memory so you can occupy your mind with other things (like fending off overly excited audience members).

The major scale starting on the root C, called the *C-major* scale or the *key of C,* looks and feels exactly like the major scales that begin on any other root. For instance, it looks exactly like the major scale starting on D (which, you guessed it, is called the *D-major* scale, or the *key of D*). Both scales have the same structure and are played with the same fingers in the same sequence; the D scale just starts two frets above the C scale.

REMEMBER

When you memorize a pattern for playing a scale or chord in one key, you can play the same pattern for that scale or chord in every key, anywhere on the neck of the bass.

Viewing a diagram of the major and minor scales

The major and minor scales are the two primary scales in music. Both are constructed in half-step and whole-step combinations. A *half step* is the distance from one fret to the next on the bass. A *whole step* skips one fret. I cover the exact construction of major and minor scales in Chapter 5.

In Figure 2-12, you see grids that indicate the notes of both the major and minor scales.

To play one complete scale, you start on one note (C, for instance) and play an ascending scale up to the same note C, but higher, as you can see on the grids in Figure 2-12. The notes of the scales fit on three strings, and you can play them without shifting your left hand. One complete scale is an *octave.*

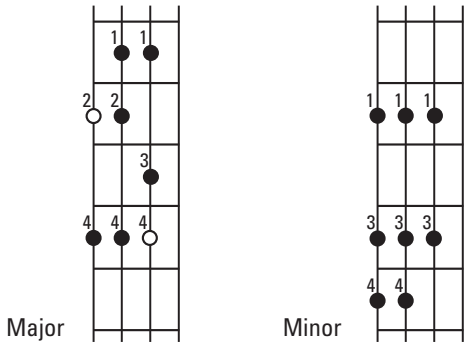


Figure 2-12: Grid showing a major scale (left) and a minor scale (right).

You can play any of the major and minor scales without shifting the position of your hand.

On Track 14 of the CD, you hear the scales from Figure 2-12 played one at a time. The first sample is a major scale in C, which means that it starts on the note C. (Keep in mind that the structure of the scale doesn't change if you play it in any other key. Try playing the same major scale starting on D, or on any other note on your bass's neck.) The second sample is a minor scale in C; again, it starts on the root C. (You can play the minor scale in any key without changing the structure.)

Playing open-string scales

Playing open-string scales involves a slightly different pattern from all the other scales. *Open-string scales* are played without pressing down on a fret for some of the notes. In two keys, E and A, the open string itself is the root. See Figure 2-13 for some sample grids.

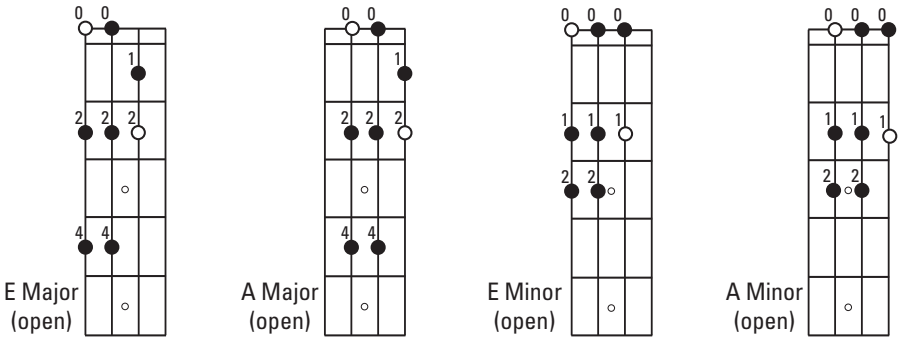


Figure 2-13: Grids showing open-string scales.

Finding the notes on the neck

Any of your patterns (except for the open E and A scales described in the preceding section) will work in all keys, so only one question remains: How do you find a certain key when someone asks you, for example, to play in C? Because your patterns can be transposed to any key, all you have to do is nail the root (in this case, C) with the proper finger of the left hand (usually the middle finger for the major patterns, and the index finger for the minor patterns), and you're in position.

The sides, and sometimes the top, of your bass's neck are marked by dots. These dots are your landmarks for determining where a note is located. The notes are organized in a sequence of half steps, which are the smallest step in music (at least in music of the Western Hemisphere). Each half step is one fret. The order of notes in half steps is: C, C♯ or D♭, D, D♯ or E♭, E, F, F♯ or G♭, G, G♯ or A♭, A, A♯ or B♭, B, and C. Notice that some of the notes have two names. For example, C♯ and D♭ are the same note. (It's a half step above C or a half step below D.)

If a note is raised by a half step (one fret), it has a ♯ (sharp) symbol next to it. For instance, if you take the C that's played on the 3rd fret of the A string (the second thickest string) and raise it a half step to the 4th fret, it becomes C♯. If a note is lowered by a half step, it has a ♭ (flat) symbol next to it. For instance, if you want to lower the B that's on the 2nd fret of the A string by a half step, press the 1st fret and the B becomes B♭.

The notes on the open strings of your bass are tuned (from low to high) E, A, D, and G. You can start from any open string and count the half steps to find your note. For example, to find C on the A string (see Figure 2-14), your 1st fret on the A string is A♯ or B♭, the next fret is B, and the one after that is C (the fret with the first dot).

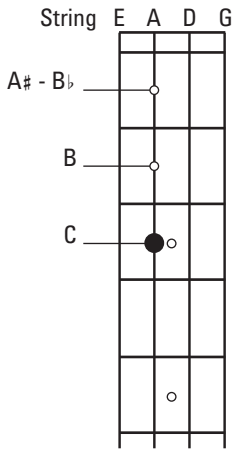


Figure 2-14: Grid showing C on an A string.

Your bass has two dots on the 12th fret. These dots are your octave marker for the open strings. By pressing down any string at the 12th fret and striking it, you produce the same note you get when playing the open string, but the note is an octave higher. If you want to find C on the E string (see Figure 2-15), you can start on the E-string octave marker and go backward: E, E♭ or D♯, D, D♭ or C♯, and C. The C note is four frets below the octave marker, between the third and fourth dots of the E string.

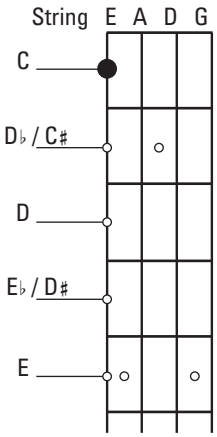


Figure 2-15: Grid showing C on an E string.

Identifying intervals: They're always in the same place

An *interval* is the distance between two notes. For example, in the scale of C, the distance from the root C up to F is four notes (C, D, E, F), so the interval is called a 4th. When you identify an interval, you count the original note (C in this example) as well as the final note (F).

Musicians communicate with interval terminology: "Hey, try a 4th instead of the 5th on the G chord," which means: Play the G with a C (an interval of a 4th) instead of the G with a D (an interval of a 5th). So recognizing intervals clearly is important. The intervals always are in the same configuration; a 4th, for example, always looks and feels the same, regardless of what key it's in.

Figure 2-16 shows the names and configurations of each interval. The open circle is the note you're measuring the distance from; the small black dot is the interval. You can find them on your own by feeling them with your hand (again covering one finger per fret). When you get comfortable with how they feel, you'll have an easier time applying them in a playing situation. You can cover all the intervals with only three strings at your disposal.

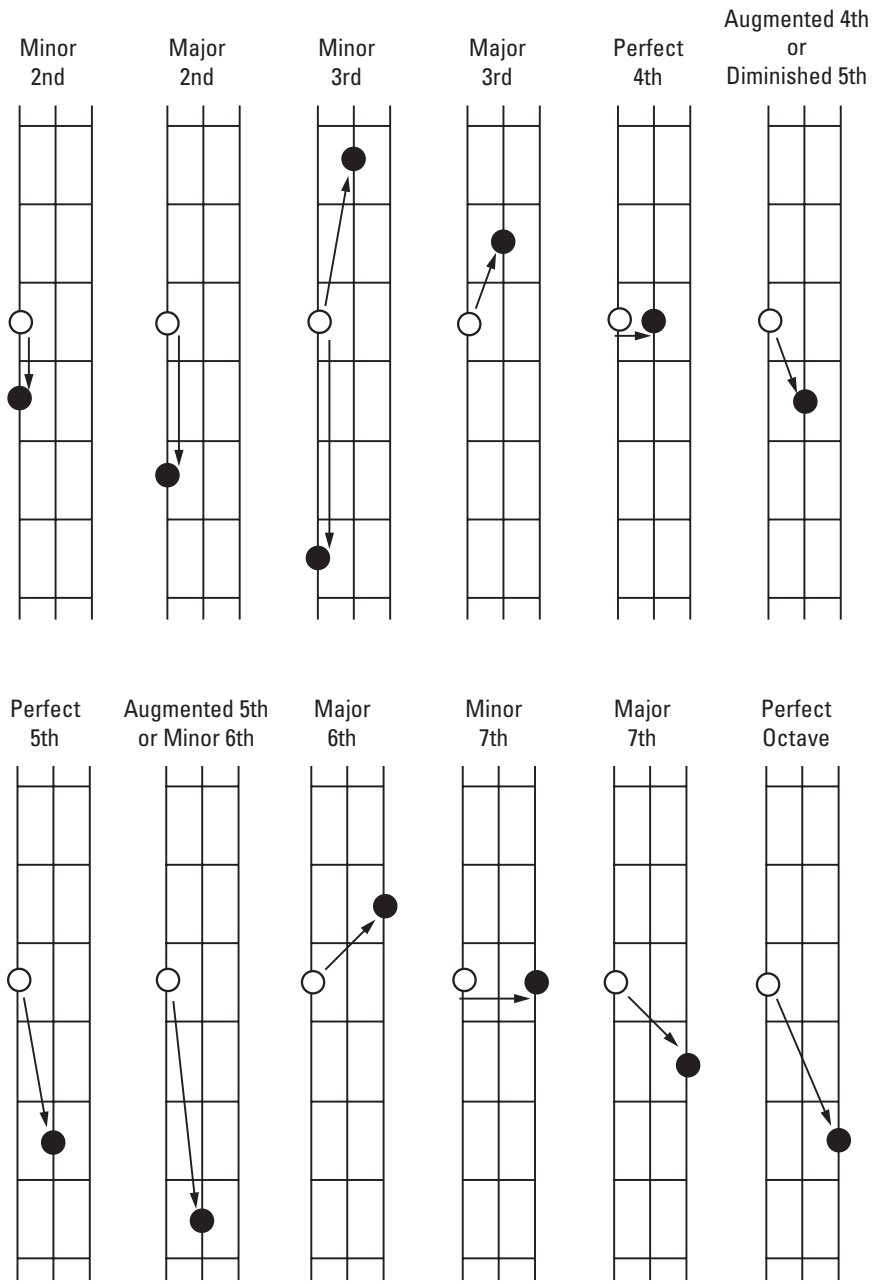


Figure 2-16: Grids showing intervals.

Tuning Your Bass Guitar

After you strap on your bass, tuning it is the first item on your to-do list. Tuning can be achieved in several ways. The following sections lead you through the different tuning techniques. It may take you a little time to get used to hearing the low frequencies of the bass notes, but with practice and a few tricks, you'll be able to tune a bass in no time.

ON THE CD

On Track 1 of the CD, I play the open strings of a four-string bass, one at a time. Get used to the sound of those strings so you know how a correctly tuned bass should sound. You can use this track for tuning your own bass. However, because you probably won't want to bring a CD player each time you play away from home, you need to be familiar with some other techniques for tuning your bass, as well.

Whether you're playing alone or with others, you need to use an aural reference source, called a *reference pitch,* for tuning your strings. A reference pitch is a note you use as the basis for tuning the strings on your bass. It's to tuning what the North Star is to ship navigation. The piano is an excellent source for a reference pitch because its tuning is very stable. But you're not limited to the piano — many other sources are available as well.

REMEMBER

When you play alone, you can use any of the methods described in the following sections for finding a reference pitch to tune your bass. But if your guitar- and piano-playing friends come over to jam, stop what you're doing and get your bass in tune with everyone else's instruments.

Reference pitch sources to use when playing alone

When you're playing alone, it doesn't matter if you're in tune with the rest of the universe, but you do need to have all your strings in tune with each other if you want your music to sound harmonious. You can use any of the sources in the following sections to tune your bass.

A tuner

Using an electronic tuner is by far the easiest way to tune your bass. The modern tuners have a display that lets you see exactly where your string is pitchwise, whether it's sharp (too high) or flat (too low), and what note you're closest to (in case your bass gets knocked around, and the G string is now closer in sound to F than G).

To get your bass into tune with a tuner, follow these steps:

1. **Buy a tuner.**

   Okay, okay! Maybe that goes without saying, but keep in mind that you want to use a tuner that can register the low bass frequencies. Not all tuners can hear bass notes.

2. **Plug your bass into the tuner via the cable (an electric cord that connects your bass to your amplifier).**

   You can see a picture of the cable in Chapter 15.

3. **Strike an open string and let it ring.**

   Low frequencies travel slowly, and the tuner needs time to read the note.

4. **Tune the string until the needle (or light) of the tuner is in the middle of the display, indicating that the string is in tune. (I tell you how to adjust the tuning heads in the later section "Tuning the bass guitar to itself.")**

   Make sure to check that the pitch indicator shows the correct note for the string (E, A, D, G), or you may find that the G string is in perfect tune with G♯, which is way out of tune with what the G string is supposed to sound like.

Tuning with a tuner works even when you're in a noisy environment. Make sure you have a spare battery for your tuner, though. Otherwise, the only way you can see motion in the tuner's needle is by watching it jump as you fling it against the wall in frustration.

TIP

You don't want to depend entirely on a mechanical device. You need to know how to tune the bass by yourself in case a garbage truck backs up and crushes your tuner as you're loading your gear into your car.

Your own strings

When you play alone, you can tune your bass relative to itself, which is referred to as *relative tuning.* With relative tuning, you use one string, usually the low E, as a reference pitch and adjust the other three so they're in tune with it. (I explain how to get the strings in tune in the later section "Tuning the bass guitar to itself.")

WARNING!

When you use relative tuning, you may not be in tune with anyone else's instrument, because the E string you used as a reference for tuning the other strings may not be a perfectly tuned E. But if you're not playing with anyone else, who cares?

A tuning fork

The tuning fork gives you one reference pitch only. It corresponds to the open A string, the second-thickest string (although several octaves apart), or the second string from the top (closest to your head). The tuning fork gives you an excellent way to tune your bass, provided you follow these steps:

1. **Strike the tuning fork against a hard surface and place the handle of it (without touching the two prongs) between your teeth.**

   You can now hear the note A resonating in your head. ***Note:*** You may not want to share your tuning fork (other than with that special someone), and you may want to keep it reasonably clean; otherwise tuning with the tuning fork could leave a bad taste in your mouth.

2. **Tune your A string to the A of the tuning fork.**

   Refer to "Tuning the bass guitar to itself," later in this chapter, for complete details on carrying out this step.

3. **Tune the other strings to the A string.**

   The section "Tuning the bass guitar to itself," later in this chapter, explains the basics of the tuning process.

Reference pitch sources to use when playing with others

When you play with other musicians, you need to get your bass in tune with their instruments. You can tune all your strings by comparing them individually with the appropriate note of the same pitch from an instrument that's already in tune, such as a piano.

However, I strongly urge you to get just one string in tune with the reference pitch and then use your tuned string as a reference pitch for tuning your other strings. I explain two reference-pitch sources in the following sections.

A piano

Because the tuning on a piano is very stable, it serves as an excellent source for a reference pitch. Figure 2-17 shows the keys on the piano that match your open strings. You may find it easiest to use a reference pitch (on the piano) that's an octave higher than the note you want to tune on your string.

A guitar

The lowest (thickest) four strings of a guitar correspond to the four strings of your bass (see Figure 2-18): Going from low to high (thick to thin), the strings are E, A, D, and G. Bear in mind that the guitar strings sound one octave higher than your bass strings. They're the same note, only higher.

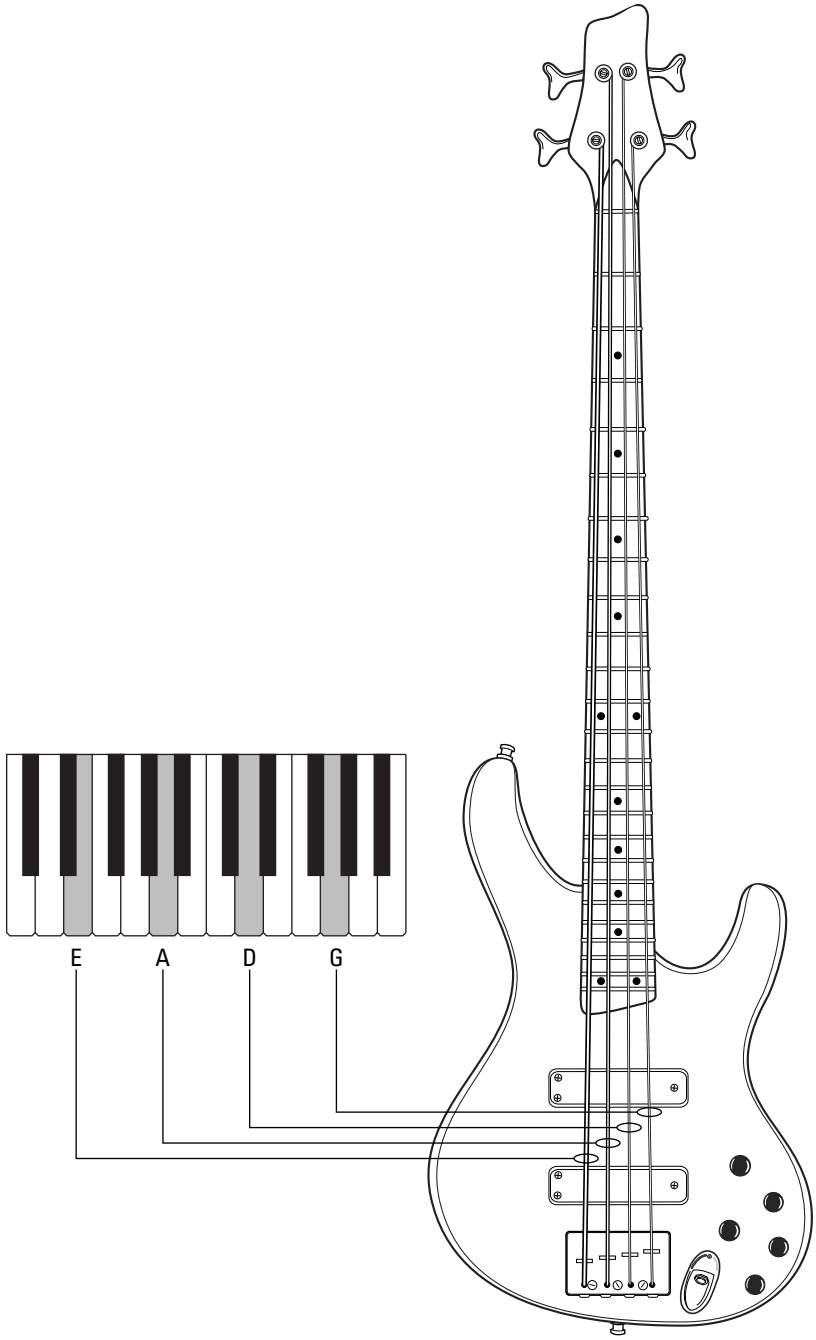


Figure 2-17: Piano keys that match the open strings on the bass.

Figure 2-18 shows which guitar strings correspond to your bass strings.

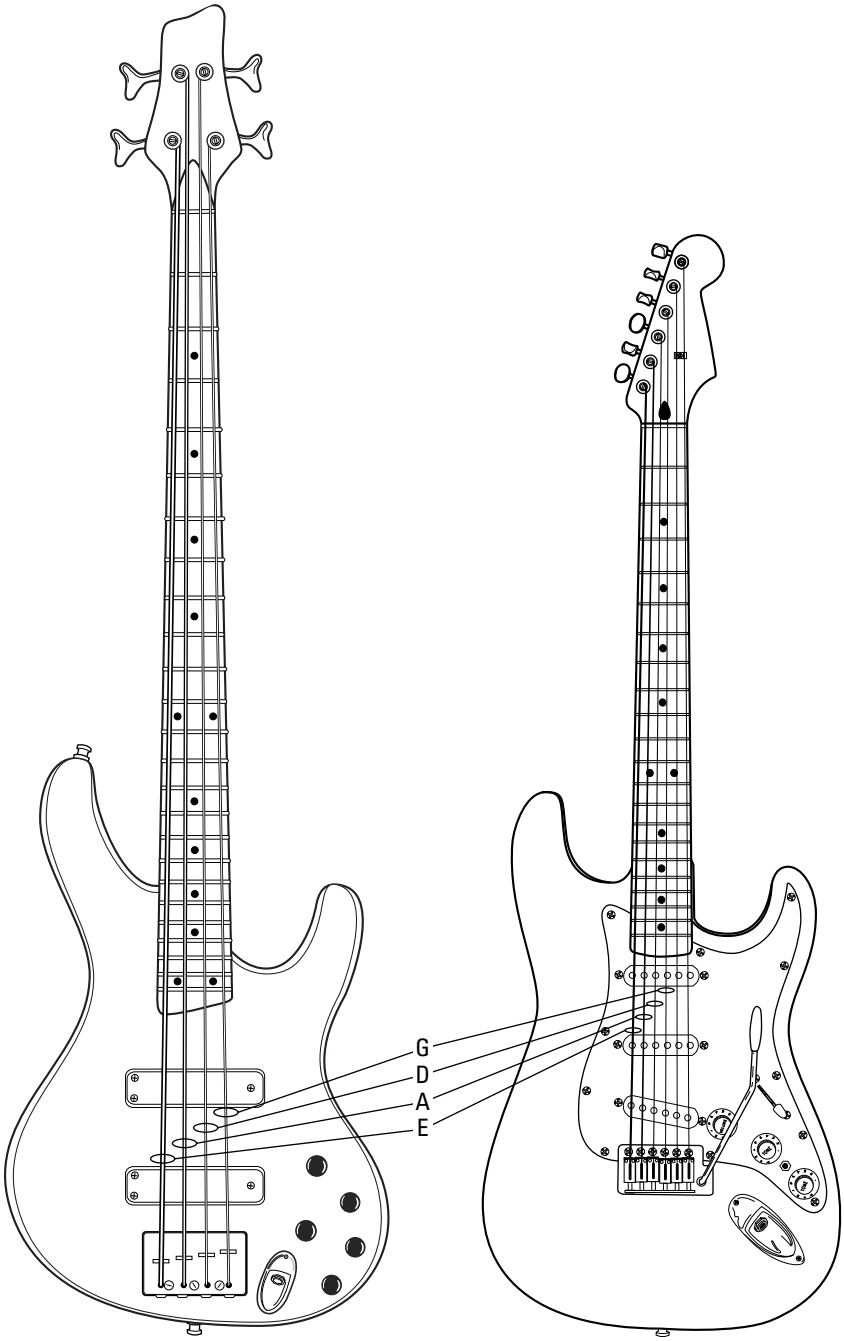


Figure 2-18: Guitar strings that match the open strings on the bass.

Tuning the bass guitar to itself

Eventually it always comes down to this: First you tune one string of your bass to a reference pitch, usually the E string, and then you tune the other three strings to that tuned string.

To tune a bass string (usually the E string) to a reference pitch, listen carefully to the sound of the reference pitch you've chosen (for reference pitches, see earlier sections in this chapter). For example, if you choose E as a reference pitch, strike the E string of your bass with one of the fingers of your right hand. If the note from your bass doesn't match exactly with the reference pitch, you hear a wavering sound. As you turn the tuning head, the wavering gets slower as your E string's pitch approaches that of the reference source. When you reach the exact match — the perfect E — the wavering stops. If the wavering gets quicker, you're turning the tuning head in the wrong direction. Restrike your E string and turn it the opposite way.

You can tune the rest of your bass guitar strings in one of three ways: with the 5th-fret method, the 7th-fret method, or the harmonics method.

REMEMBER

In all cases, if the notes don't match exactly, you hear a wavering sound. When you turn the tuning head for each string, the wavers occur at wider intervals as they approach an exact match. When you find the exact match, the wavering stops.

The 5th-fret tuning method

The 5th-fret tuning method is the most common method for tuning bass guitars.

TIP

If you're playing with other people, be sure to get a reference pitch for the E string (the lowest and thickest string) from one of the other tuned instruments, and then tune that string before tuning the others.

The following steps explain how to tune your bass using the 5th-fret method (see Figure 2-19):

1. **Using one of the fingers on your left hand, press the E string down at the 5th fret.**

   Touch only the E string, because the open A string needs to vibrate freely. The place to press is actually between the 4th and 5th frets, slightly behind the 5th fret.

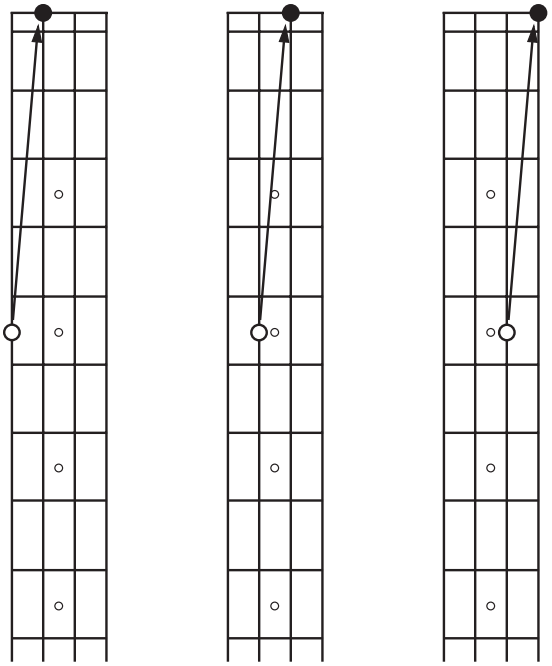


Figure 2-19: The 5th-fret tuning method.

2. **Strike the fretted E and the open A strings together with your right hand and let them ring.**

   While you're comparing the sounds of the two strings, keep your left-hand finger holding down the lower string at the 5th fret. Get used to turning your tuning heads with your right hand (by reaching over your left hand) when using this method. The notes should be a perfect match. If they're not (which is usually the case), follow these steps:

   a. **Listen to whether the sound of the A string is lower (flat) or higher (sharp) than the E string.**

      You hear a wavering sound if the strings aren't in tune.

   b. **If you're not sure whether the A string is sharp or flat, lower the pitch of the A string until you can hear that it's clearly flat.**

   c. **Restrike both strings, and then slowly raise the pitch of the A string by turning its tuning head with your right hand until the sound matches the pitch of the E string at the 5th fret.**

      If you go too far, you can hear that the A string is sharp (too high). In that case, lower the pitch of the A string by turning its tuning head in the other direction. When the A string is in tune with the E string, continue with the next step.

3. **Press the A string down at the 5th fret (touching only the A string).**

4. **Strike the A and open D strings together and let them ring.**

   Listen to whether the D string is sharp or flat, and then turn the tuning head for the D string accordingly until the pitch of both strings matches perfectly. When the D string is in tune with the 5th fret of the A string, proceed to the next step.

5. **Press the D string down at the 5th fret (touching only the D string).**

6. **Strike the D and open G strings together and let them ring.**

   Listen to whether the G string is sharp or flat, and then turn the tuning head for the G string accordingly until the pitch of the 5th fret of the D string matches the open G string perfectly.

Your bass is now in tune. If you tuned the E string to a reference pitch, you're now ready to play with anybody who's in tune with that same reference pitch.

The 7th-fret tuning method

The 7th-fret method is similar to the 5th-fret method, but it works in reverse (from high to low). You need to tune your G string (not your bathing suit, but the highest, or skinniest, string on your bass) to a reference pitch from a tuned instrument (if you're playing with others).

When you have the G string in tune, press down on it at the 7th fret. The note you get when you strike the string with the 7th fret pressed is D, but it's an octave higher than the next lower (thicker) string. (See Figure 2-20 for a picture of the 7th-fret tuning method.)

Here's a step-by-step description of how to tune your bass with the 7th-fret method:

1. **Using a finger on your left hand, press the G string down at the 7th fret.**

   Make sure you don't touch the adjacent (lower) D string; both strings should vibrate freely. (This brings a whole new meaning to the expression of fretting about the G string, doesn't it?)

2. **Strike the fretted G and open D strings with your right hand and let them ring together.**

   The pitch is an octave apart, but it's the same note. Listen to whether the D string is sharp or flat, and then turn the tuning head for the D string accordingly until the strings are in tune with each other.

3. **Press the D string down at the 7th fret without touching the next lowest string (the A string).**

4. **Strike the D and open A strings and let them ring together.**

   The pitch is an octave apart, but it's the same note. Again, listen to whether the A string is sharp or flat, and then turn the tuning head for the A string accordingly until the A string is in tune.

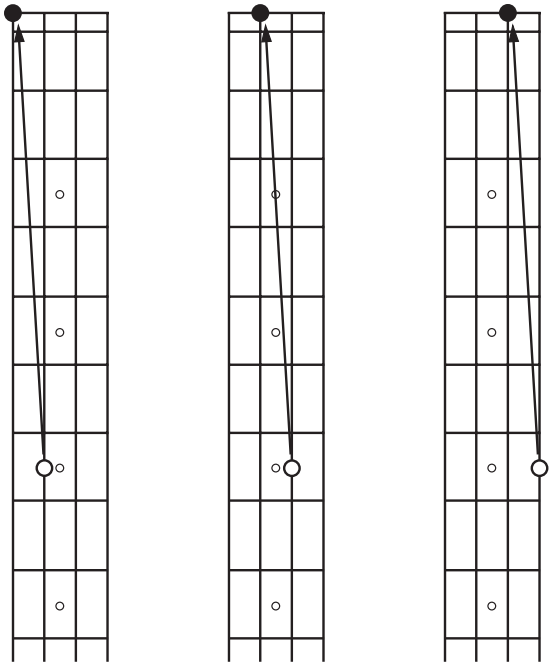


Figure 2-20: Tuning with the 7th-fret tuning method.

5. **Press the A string down at the 7th fret, making sure you don't touch the E string.**
6. **Strike the A and open E strings together and let them ring.**

   As with the other strings, the pitch is an octave apart, but it's the same note. Listen to whether the E string is sharp or flat, and then turn the tuning head for the E string accordingly. When the E string is in tune, your entire bass will be in tune.

The harmonics tuning method

Harmonics are notes that sound naturally on a string when you lightly touch it at certain points and then strike it with your right hand. Because the bass strings sound so low, the higher harmonics are much easier to hear. The strongest and clearest harmonics can be found at the 12th fret, the 7th fret, and the 5th fret.

Take a look at Figure 2-21 for the main harmonics.

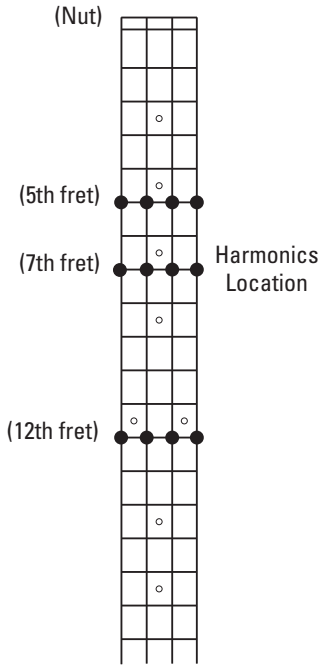


Figure 2-21: The main harmonics.

The sounds of the harmonics are crystal clear, which makes them a great tuning tool. However, to use the harmonics, you must first develop a solid technique for playing them. To play harmonics, follow these steps:

1. **Lightly touch the desired string at the 12th, 7th, or 5th fret with one of the fingers on your left hand (the middle or index finger is best, but any will do).**

   Don't press the string to the fret. Leave your left-hand finger at the contact point (12th, 7th, or 5th fret) when you strike the string with your right hand in the next step.

2. **Place your right hand close to the bridge, and strike the string (that you're touching with your left hand) with either the index or middle finger of your right hand.**

   The closer your striking (right-hand) finger is to the bridge, the clearer your harmonic will be.

3. **When the harmonic rings out, you can remove your left-hand finger from the string.**

   The harmonic will continue to ring out as long as you don't touch the string.

The harmonics tuning method is the most difficult and most precise tuning method you can use to tune your bass without a tuner. But if you follow these steps, you'll get the hang of tuning your bass to itself using harmonics in no time:

1. **Using the pinkie of your left hand, lightly touch the G string at the 7th fret. (The G string should already be tuned to an outside reference source.)**

   Strike the string and let it ring. This sounds the harmonic.

2. **Using the middle finger of your left hand, lightly touch the D string at the 5th fret.**

   Strike the harmonic and let it ring *together* with the previous harmonic. Adjust the tuning head of the D string until the wavering stops.

3. **Using the pinkie of your left hand, lightly touch the D string at the 7th fret.**

   Strike the harmonic and let it ring.

4. **Using the middle finger of your left hand, lightly touch the A string at the 5th fret.**

   Strike the harmonic and let it ring *together* with the previous harmonic. Adjust the tuning head of the A string until the wavering stops.

5. **Using the pinkie of your left hand, lightly touch the A string at the 7th fret.**

   Strike the harmonic and let it ring.

6. **Using the middle finger of your left hand, lightly touch the E string at the 5th fret.**

   Strike the harmonic and let it ring *together* with the previous harmonic. Adjust the tuning head of the E string until the wavering stops.

Check out Figure 2-22 for the relationships between the harmonics.

The following list gives you the most important harmonics for tuning:

- The 7th-fret harmonic on the G string (the thinnest string) is exactly the same note as the 5th-fret harmonic on the D string (the second-skinniest string).
- The 7th-fret harmonic on the D string is exactly the same note as the 5th-fret harmonic on the A string (the second-thickest string).
- The 7th-fret harmonic on the A string is exactly the same note as the 5th-fret harmonic on the E string (the thickest string).

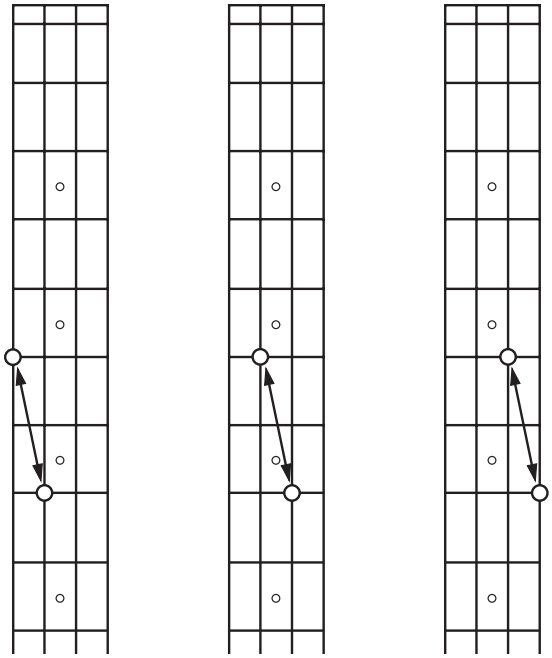


Figure 2-22: The relationships between the harmonics.

Most of the notes that are offered to you as reference pitches (such as from a guitar) are in a higher octave. If you tried to match the higher note exactly, the string you're tuning would snap and whip around your ears. Comparing notes that are an octave (or two) apart is easier with harmonics.

When you strike a harmonic on a string that isn't in perfect tune, you can hear a beating or wavering sound. Let the harmonics ring, and slowly turn the tuning head of the string you're trying to tune. If the wavering gets faster, you're turning in the wrong direction. If the wavering gets slower, you're turning in the correct direction. Turn the tuning head until the wavering stops. When the tone is even, your string is in tune. If the wavering gets slower and then speeds up again, you've turned the tuning head past the correct pitch. In this case, slowly turn the tuning head in the other direction until the wavering stops.

Playing a Song with Your Bass Guitar

Ladies and gentlemen, it's time for your very first song! What? Already? You bet! You may not be ready to tour, but you can certainly play along with the

song on Track 2. In fact, you can do it with one hand tied behind your back. All you need to do is play the open strings on your bass . . . and break out some attitude.

ON THE CD

Tracks 2 and 3 on the CD are play-alongs of two songs, the first using the open strings and the second using closed strings. I cover both scenarios in detail in the following sections. When you're comfortable with the songs, eliminate the bass on the recording by panning to one side so you can play along without any help.

Making some noise with the open strings

Let your striking hand become comfortable with the individual strings on your bass. The thickest string, the one closest to your head, is the E string. Strike it a few times to get a feel for it. Careful! Don't strike it too hard. You get plenty of sound by striking the strings with a light touch, and quite frankly, the bass sounds at its best with a light touch.

The next string, the second-thickest, is the A string. Same deal here: Strike it a few times until you're comfortable and it sounds good. Next to the A string is the D string. Go ahead, you know what to do. Finally, the fourth string, the skinny one closest to your feet, is the G string (to bass players it's more than a fashion statement). Make it sound good and get ready to rock and roll!

ON THE CD

When you look at Figure 2-23, you see the letters that correspond to your open strings. Strike the appropriate string, in tempo with the song, each time you see its letter. Listen to Track 2 a few times before playing along.

Closing the strings

Ready for another rousing performance? If you've really followed my instructions up to this point and tied one hand behind your back, please untie it now. You need it for this next song.

Looking at the fingerboard of your bass, you see the frets and the dots (*inlays*) between some of the frets. Find the 3rd fret. In the space between the 2nd and 3rd frets you can see a dot. Press down on the E string with a finger (not the thumb) of your fretting hand in that space so the string is now touching the 3rd (and 2nd) fret. You have just "closed" the E string. Instead of an E, you're now playing a G. While holding the string in place with your fretting hand, strike the *same* string with your other hand and listen to the sound.

TRACK 2

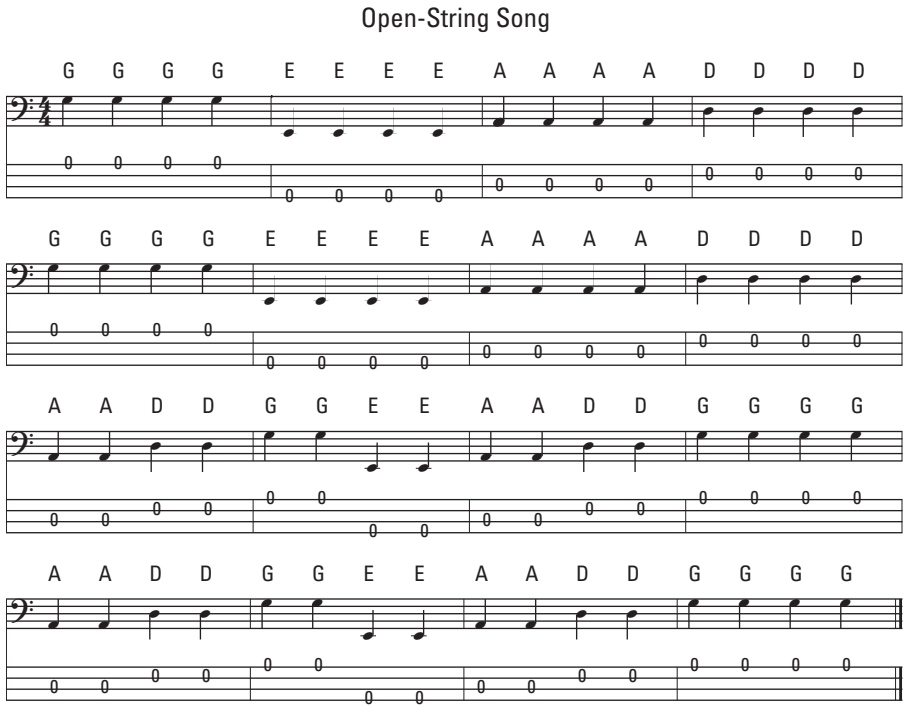


Figure 2-23: Song played on open strings.

Find a balance in strength and coordination with both hands. If you don't press strongly enough with your fretting hand, the string will buzz; if you press too hard, it'll hurt. If you strike too hard with the other hand, the string will rattle; if you don't strike it hard enough, you won't get much sound. Keep experimenting and have fun. Repeat this process with all the strings and get your hands used to what each string feels like.

Use your newfound skill in the song on Track 3. To keep things clear, the song in Figure 2-24 is written descriptively rather than in musical notation. When you see "E string: 3rd fret," it means that you press the E string to the 3rd fret and strike it evenly in time with the music. When you see "A string: 3rd fret," you do the same with the A string. Ditto for "D string: 3rd fret" as well as "G string: 3rd fret." Only the 3rd fret is being used right now so that you can acquaint yourself with the sound and feel of the closed strings.

TRACK 3

Closed-String Song

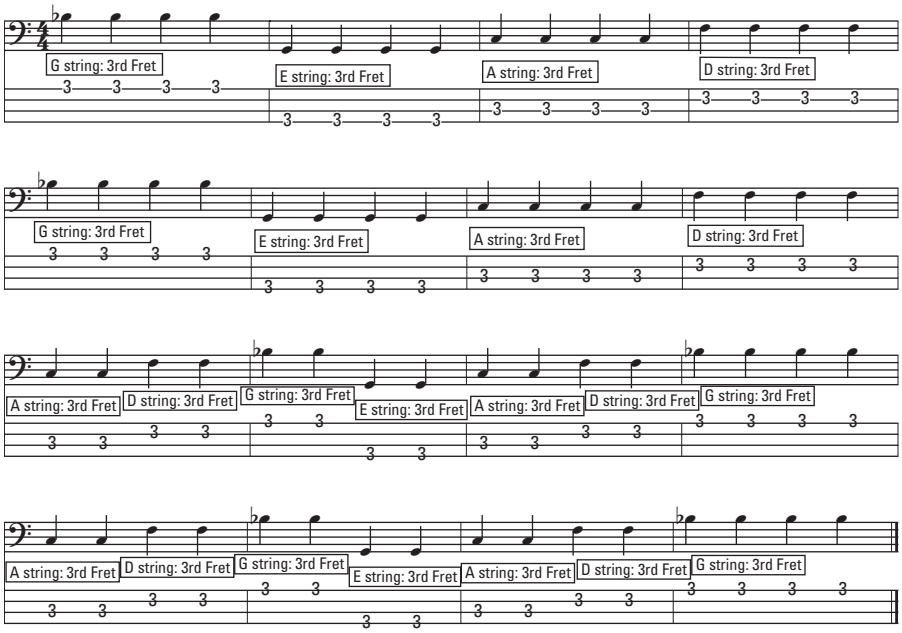


Figure 2-24: Song using closed strings.

You're now well on your way to being a full-fledged bass player. Congratulations!

Chapter 3

Reading, 'Riting, and Rhythm

In This Chapter

- Discovering different types of notation
- Finding notes in all octaves
- Playing with the metronome
- Understanding phrases, measures, and beats
- Reading music and playing while reading

Reading music isn't nearly as important to bass players as it is for classical musicians (who re-create someone else's music when they read it). A bassist is more likely to create his or her own bass lines for a tune by incorporating chords and scales (see Chapter 5), or by listening to the other players. However, sometimes you come up with an idea for a bass part that's just perfect for a tune, and you don't want to forget it. What do you do? You write it down. How do you remember it when you need it? You read what you wrote.

In this chapter, I introduce you to some fast and easy ways for tackling the dilemma of reading music. And by the time you're finished with this chapter, you'll probably agree that it really is pretty easy . . . and useful.

Reading Notation: No Pain, Much Gain

Learning to read music is nothing to be afraid of. You don't have to read music to be a good (or great) bass player, but it certainly enriches your musical experience and opens doors that may otherwise remain shut.

When you solve the mystery of reading music and discover the joy in it, you may find yourself reading Bach preludes instead of a novel before going to bed. In this section, I introduce four types of musical notation: chord notation, music notation, tablature (or tab), and the vocal chart (or lead sheet). For bassists, these are the most important notational systems.

Chords as mood-makers

Chords can evoke certain moods. For instance, a major chord usually sounds happy and bright, whereas a minor chord sounds sad and dark. Just as a color on canvas may evoke a certain feeling, a chord works on the same principle, only acoustically instead of visually.

Chord notation: The chord chart

The *chord chart,* which is one form of musical notation, tells you in *chord symbols* what notes you can choose and how many beats each chord lasts. Chord symbols state the *root* of a chord (E, for example; see Chapters 2 and 5 for more info on the root) and the *color* of that chord (*m* for minor or *Maj* for major, for example; see the sidebar "Chords as mood-makers" for more on the color of chords). You can play the notes from the chord or scale that relates to the chord symbol. For more details on the happy mating of chord symbol, chord, and scale, check out Chapter 5.

A chord chart doesn't tell you exactly which notes to play. The style of the music (and your or your bandleader's taste) influences the sequence and rhythm of the notes you choose from the chord. Part of the fun of playing is choosing your own notes and developing your own creative style. Just keep an open mind . . . and open ears. If it sounds good to you, it usually is.

For more information about which notes are best, look at Part IV of this book, which discusses the many genres of music and tells you how to play different chords in different styles. Figure 3-1 shows you how to play four beats of music for the E minor chord in a rock style.

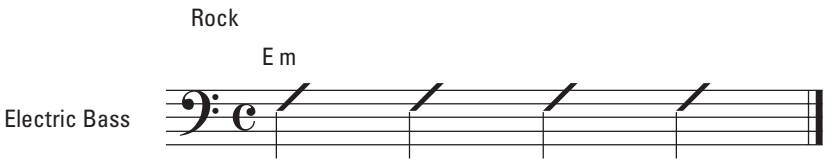


Figure 3-1: Measure of E minor from a chord chart in chord notation.

Music notation: Indicating rhythm and notes

Another form of notation spells out both the rhythm and the notes; it's known as regular *music notation.* Regular music notation is written on a musical staff. The *musical staff* consists of five lines and four spaces on which the notes are written. The *clef* (the first symbol you see at the beginning of the musical staff) shows whether the notes on the staff are low (bass) or high (treble). For bass players, the bass clef is the clef of choice. (We try to stay out of treble if we can.)

Music notation is much more exact than the chord chart (see the preceding section for more on the chord chart). Not only does it tell you what note to play, it also tells you which octave to play the note in, how long to hold the note, which note to accent, and so on. In short, this method doesn't leave much room for creativity, but it does leave the embellishments up to you. Figure 3-2 shows the measure of E minor in music notation; it also shows the different parts of the staff.

ON THE CD

You can hear *exactly* what Figure 3-2 sounds like when you listen to Track 4 on the CD. Every note is accounted for.

TRACK 4

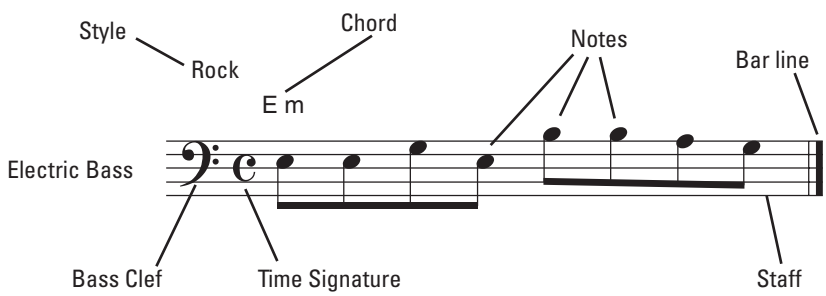


Figure 3-2: Measure of E minor in music notation with a description of the staff.

REMEMBER

The bass sounds one octave lower than the written note. Piano players, when reading from the same sheet as the bass player, play the same notes an octave higher (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of octaves).

Tablature notation: Showing strings, frets, and sequence

Tablature (or *tab*) shows you which strings to press on which frets for the correct notes. Using this method, you can see the exact notes and their sequence, but you generally can't see the rhythm, which is why tablature usually is accompanied by music notation (see previous section).

When you rely on tab notation, bear in mind that the frets indicated may not be the only places on the neck where you can find those notes. For example, the G on the open G string also can be found on

- The 5th fret of the D string
- The 10th fret of the A string
- The 15th fret of the E string

See Figure 3-3 for the different locations of the same note G.

The best choice for which note to play is determined by the position of the other notes in the pattern you're playing. Keep in mind that you want to avoid any unnecessary shifts in your left hand; whenever possible, play the notes of the chord in one area of the bass neck.

The vocal chart: Using lyrics and chords when working with a singer or songwriter

The vocal chart is a commonly used form of notation (combining the lyrics of a song with its chords) that you use when you're working with a singer or songwriter. You can find examples of vocal charts (and other forms of notation) at `www.bassremedies.com`. With this type of notation, you're only getting the most basic information for your accompaniment, which means that you're free to explore different ways of interpreting a song. In a vocal chart, the chord is simply written over the word that's sung when the chord is played.

For example, the song "Happy Birthday" would have a G over "Happy," a C over "Birthday," and a G over "you." The line would look like this:

```
G       C           G
Happy Birthday to You
```

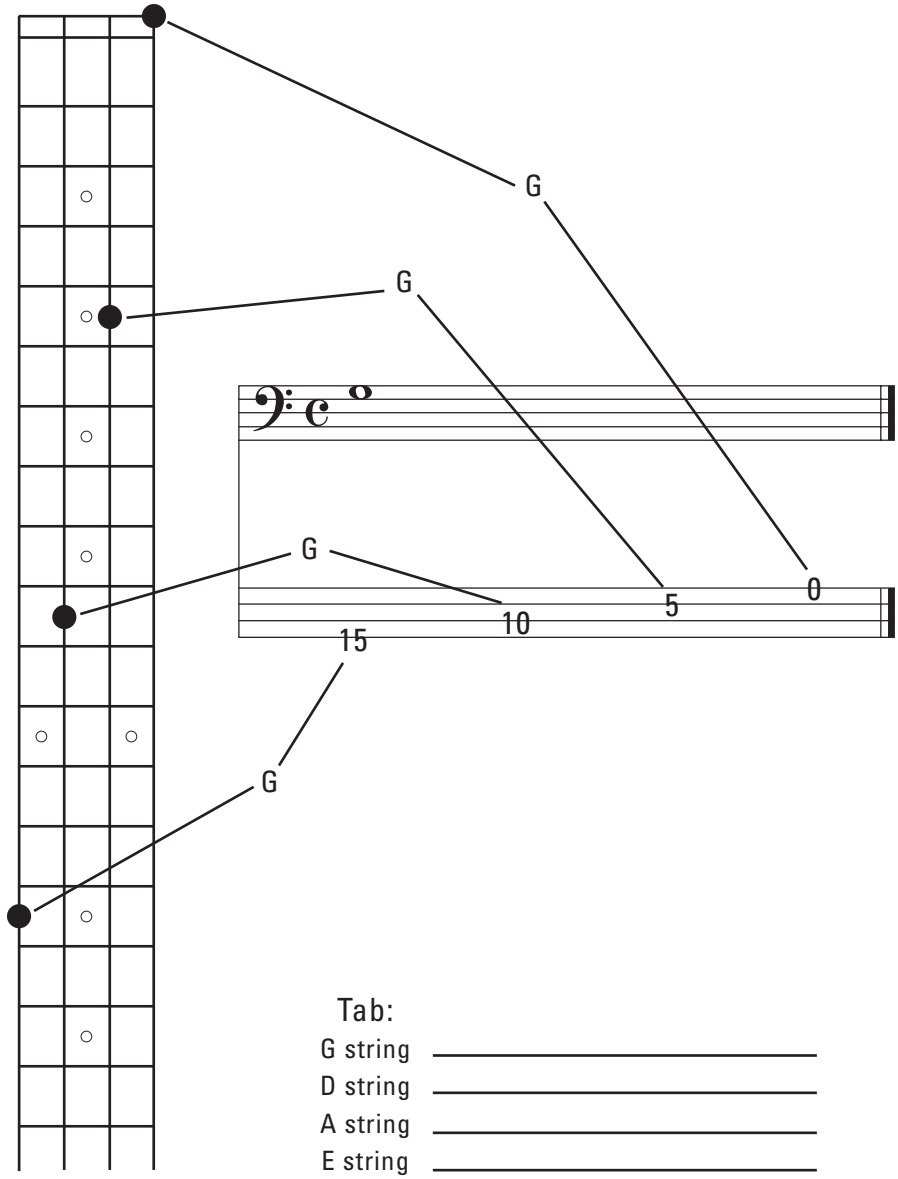


Figure 3-3: Tab for G on the fret board.

Vocal charts are an imprecise notation technique, but if you're familiar with the song, sometimes that's all you need. Just make sure all your bandmates are familiar with the same version of the song you're playing. And remember, in this particular case . . . follow the singer!

Finding Any Note in Any Octave

After you understand the four types of musical notation, you need to know where the notes are located on the bass neck and what they look like in notation. Figure 3-4 gives you an illustration of this.

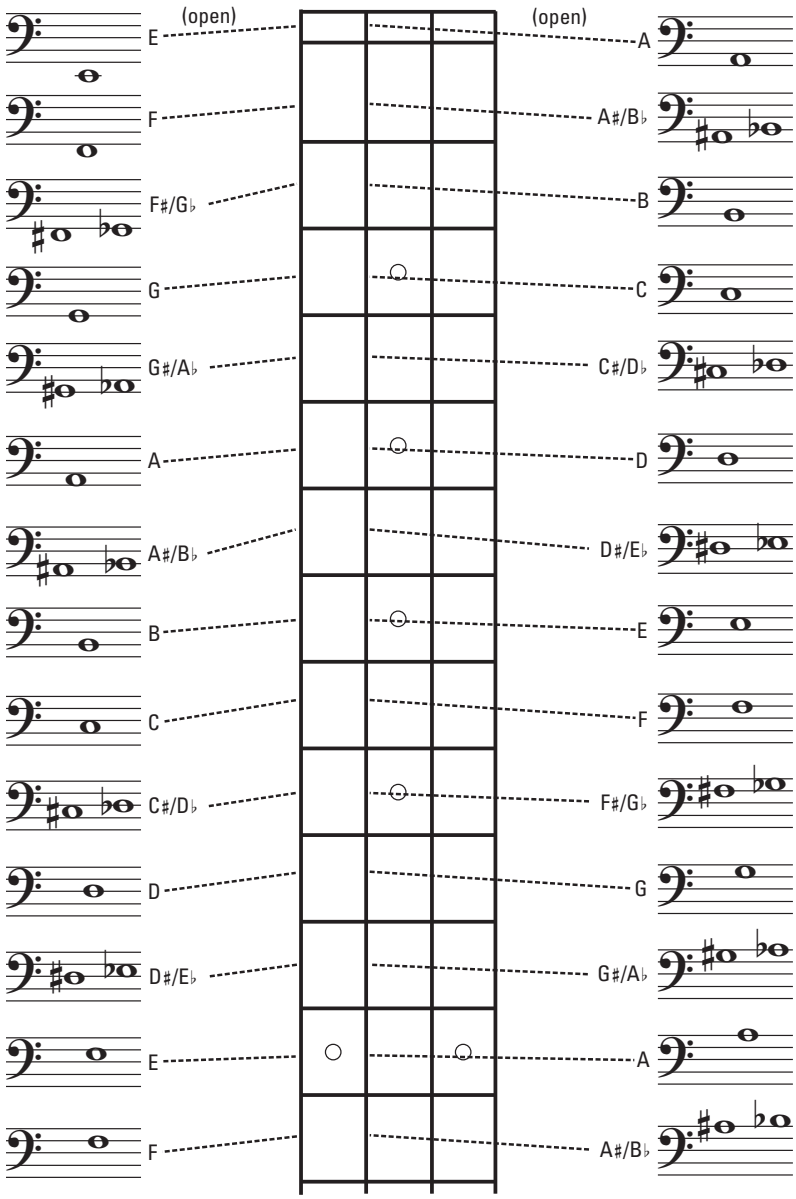
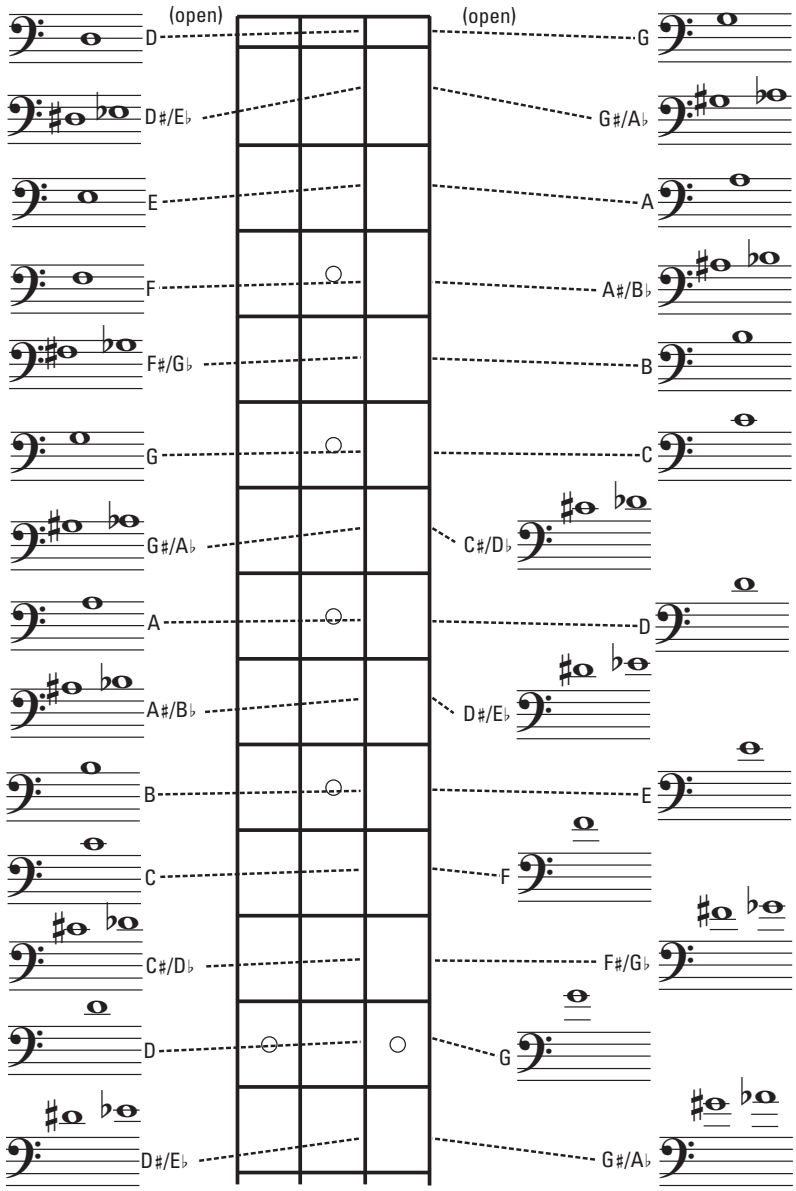


Figure 3-4: The notes on the neck of the bass and on the staff.



Finding notes over the entire bass range can be challenging (but not impossible if you read this section), because each note occurs in at least two places on the neck of the bass. Knowing where the alternative notes are located allows you to play easily and efficiently anywhere on the fingerboard. You can

use one of the three following methods to help you find the notes you want on any part of the neck:

- The octave method
- The handspan-plus-two-frets method
- The marker method

The *octave method,* also called the *two-strings/two-frets* method is the most common method for finding the same note in a different place. Here's how to do it:

1. **Start by placing your left-hand index finger on any note on the E string.**

   You can find the same note an octave higher by letting your ring finger cross two strings and land on the D string. The ring finger naturally positions itself on the octave of the original note, two frets above the index finger.

2. **Press your left-hand ring finger down for the octave.**

   Your octave note is two strings and two frets above your original note. This method also works from the A string to the G string, and you can use your middle finger and your pinkie. If you have a note on the G or D string and you want to find its lower octave, just reverse the process. Figure 3-5 shows the relationship of the notes using the octave (or two-strings/two-frets) method.

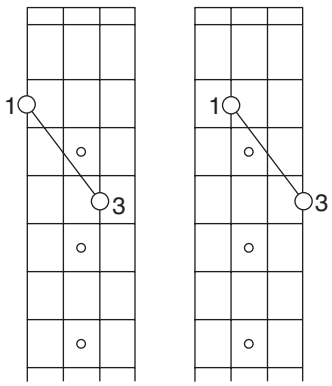


Figure 3-5: The octave or two-strings/two-frets method.

Whereas the octave method helps you locate a note two strings away, the *handspan-plus-two-frets* method helps you locate a note on the adjacent string. Here are the steps for this method:

1. **Start by pressing down a note on the A string with your left-hand index finger, and strike it with your right hand.**
2. **Now shift your left hand two frets toward the bridge and move your pinkie from the A string to the E string.**
3. **Press your pinkie down on the E string in that position and play that note.**

You now have the same note in the same octave as your original note on the A string. This process also works in reverse. You also can use this method when going from the D string to the A string and from the G string to the D string. Figure 3-6 shows the relationship of the notes in the handspan-plus-two-frets method.

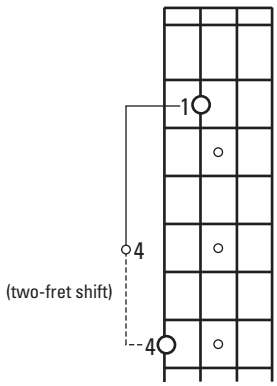


Figure 3-6: The handspan-plus-two-frets method.

If you need to locate a note on the same string, use the *marker method.* With this method, you simply use the markers (dots) embedded on the side and face of your bass neck. If you look at the neck, you can see one section — on the 12th fret — that has two dots in the space of one fret. This fret is your octave marker for your open strings. You can play the octaves for all the open strings (E, A, D, and G) at this fret.

For example, the octave of open E is directly at the double dot on the same string. If you want to play the octave of low F on the E string (the note on the 1st fret of the E string), you can find its octave one fret above the double dot (on the 13th fret). If you want to play the octave of low G on the E string (the note at the first dot of the E string), you can find its octave at the first dot past the double dot (15th fret) of the E string. The marker method applies to all the other strings as well.

You can practice all these methods of finding notes by choosing a note at random (C, for example) and then locating all the instances of that note on your bass neck. When you're finished, move on to another note (A♭, for example). Repeat this exercise until you cover all 12 notes: C, C♯/D♭, D, D♯/E♭, E, F, F♯/G♭, G, G♯/A♭, A, A♯/B♭, and B. (***Note:*** A "♯" raises a note by one half step, and a "♭" lowers it by one half step.)

Later in this chapter, I show you how to put the different kinds of musical notation into practice, but first you need to understand rhythm.

Using the Metronome: You Know, That Tick-Tock Thing

A *metronome* is a device that helps you develop good rhythm. Metronomes come in many shapes and colors, but they all have one thing in common: They give you a steady clicking sound to base your timing on. Like a very loud clock tick, the metronome produces a steady beat. You can adjust the speed of the click to suit your needs.

The old-fashioned acoustic metronomes have a small weight that swings back and forth. They need to be used on a level surface and must be wound up periodically. Electric metronomes need to be plugged into a wall outlet. The small battery-powered metronomes are the most common and the most user-friendly.

Just in case you don't have a metronome handy, but you have a computer hooked up to the Internet, you can work with my metronome online at `www.thefreemetronome.com`. There goes any excuse you may have had for not using a metronome.

Setting the metronome

A sequence of numbers (usually from 40 to 208) is located on the face of the metronome. These numbers tell you how many clicks per minute you'll hear when you set the dial to a particular number. In other words, if you set your metronome to 162, you'll hear 162 clicks, at regular intervals, in one minute.

Playing along

Don't be surprised if it takes some practice to regulate your playing to the ticking sound of the metronome. It's a challenge at first to get in sync with

the clicks and not rush or drag in the space between each one. The slower the tempo on the metronome, the father apart the clicks are from each other and the more difficult it is for you to keep exact time.

Here's an exercise that may help you get used to playing with a metronome: Set the metronome to 80 and play a repeated note on your bass, matching the click of the metronome exactly.

ON THE CD

Listen to Track 5 on the CD to hear what it sounds like to play evenly to the click of a metronome set on 80.

Playing with a metronome enables you to keep a steady rhythm not just at tempo 80 but at any tempo. Set your metronome at different tempos and try playing along.

Dividing Music into Phrases, Measures, and Beats

Tunes are divided into *phrases.* You can recognize a phrase by listening to singers — they tend to take a breath between each phrase. Phrases are divided into *measures* (bars), and measures are divided into *beats* (or clicks of the metronome).

REMEMBER

In most tunes, four clicks of the metronome equal one measure, and four measures equal one phrase. In other words, a musical phrase is 16 beats long, or 16 clicks of the metronome. The organization of phrases makes it easier to keep your place in the music and communicate with the other musicians. To see what phrases, measures, and beats look like, check out Figure 3-7.

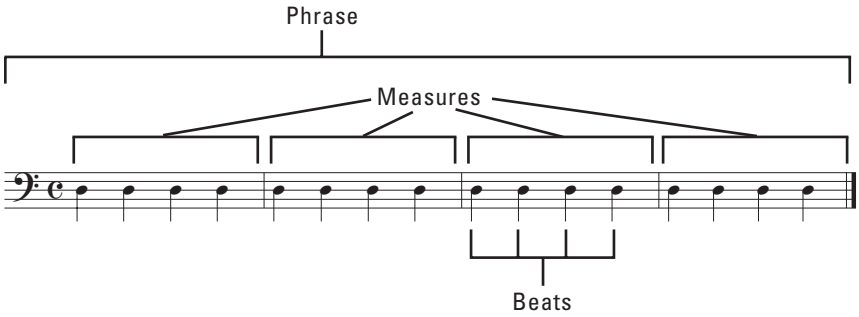


Figure 3-7: Phrases, measures, and beats.

In order to subdivide the phrases into smaller units you need an understanding of rhythm and its notation. Figure 3-8 shows all the rhythmic notes discussed in this section and how they relate to each other. You may want to refer to the figure as you read through this section.

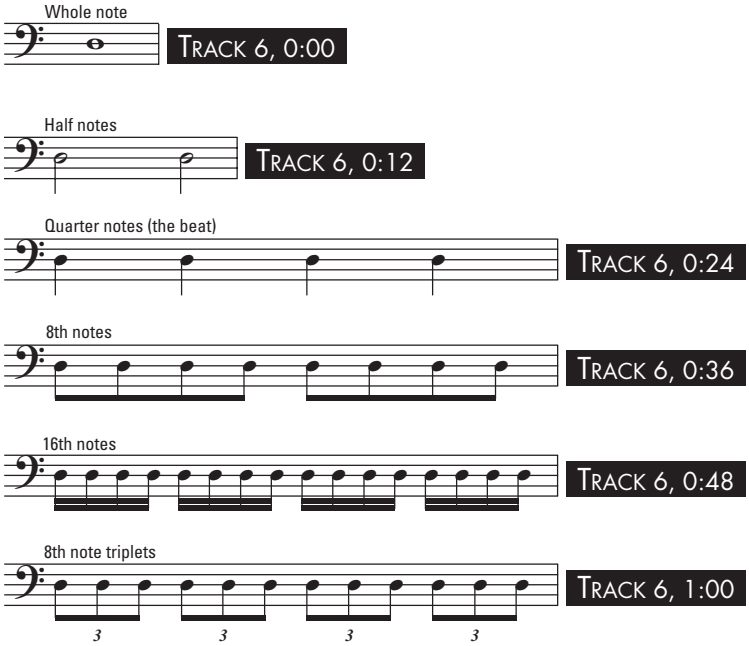


Figure 3-8: Rhythmic notes.

ON THE CD

On Track 6 you can hear the different durations of each note in comparison to the beat.

The quarter note

Each of the four beats (metronome clicks) in a measure (or bar) equals a *quarter note.* These four beats make up the *1-2-3-4* of the musical count. Imagine that you're marching on the street. You walk at a steady, even speed, and your feet go in a regular rhythm: Left, right, left, right, and so on. This steady marching is what your quarter-note rhythm feels like — a regular pulse: *1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4,* and so on and on and on . . . .

Each of the beats can in turn be divided into equal parts. In order to come up with interesting grooves and bass parts (like the ones I describe in Chapter 6), you need to be able to divide a beat in several different ways.

The eighth note

The *eighth note* is twice as fast as the quarter note. Imagine that you're still marching — left, right, left, right. As you continue, tap your hand twice on your thigh, at regular intervals, for each step you take. Instead of counting *1-2-3-4,* subdivide the beat by adding an *and* at the end of each number, making it *1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and* evenly spaced. If you do this correctly, you still move at exactly the same speed as before.

Playing eighth notes on the bass works the same way as marching and tapping. Play two evenly spaced notes on your bass to each click of the metronome. Concentrate on keeping the notes evenly spaced — one note on the click and the other note halfway between the clicks.

The sixteenth note

The *sixteenth note* is twice as fast as the eighth note, and four times as fast as the quarter note. Imagine that you're still marching (by this time you're probably tired and miles from home) and counting *1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and.* Without changing your pace, tap your hand twice as fast as before. You're now tapping four times for each step, which is the sixteenth-note rhythm. Take your count of *1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and* and add an *e* after the number and an *a* after the *and.* Keeping the count even, count *1 e and a – 2 e and a – 3 e and a – 4 e and a.* Your pace is unchanged, and you're still marching at the same speed, but the subdivision of the beats gives you much more to "talk" about.

TIP

You may want to try this exercise with your metronome. Keep the tempo reasonable (between 60 and 80) until you get used to it. You may want to try marching your feet to the clicks of the metronome and tapping out the subdivisions for the eighth and sixteenth notes with your hand. When you're comfortable with this exercise, try it with your bass instead of with your hands and feet.

The half note

The *half note* is half as fast as the quarter note. In other words, two quarter notes fill the space of one half note. If you're still marching (by now you're probably halfway across the continent), tap your hand once for every two steps you take. You're still moving at the same speed, but your rhythm is now only half as fast.

The whole note

The *whole note* is half as fast as the half note, and four times slower than the quarter note. If you're still marching (and you haven't come to a large body of water yet), tap your hand *once* for every four steps you take. As always, your speed doesn't change; the rhythm of your hand is the only thing that changes.

The triplet

All the subdivisions of the notes I describe in the previous sections are either double or half, and divisible by two. In many tunes, however, the beats are subdivided into three parts, which brings me to the triplet.

A *triplet rhythm* subdivides the beat into three even rhythmic intervals. As you continue to march your way across the globe, tap your hand three times evenly for each step you take. Your step still represents the quarter note, but your hand is now tapping three notes for each quarter note. You call these eighth-note triplets.

The dot

The *dot* is a notational device that allows you to extend the *value* (duration) of a note by half of its original value. The quarter note, for example, has a value of two eighth notes. When you add a dot to a quarter note, you add one extra eighth note to its value, and you end up with a note that has a value of three eighth notes. Figure 3-9 shows you the most common dotted notes.

Figure 3-9: The most common dotted notes.

The tie

The *tie* combines two notes. For instance, if you tie a quarter note to another quarter note, you increase the length of the original quarter note by another quarter note. However, you don't restrike the second note. The tie simply adds the two notes together. You can combine any two notes with a tie. Figure 3-10 shows common ties between notes.

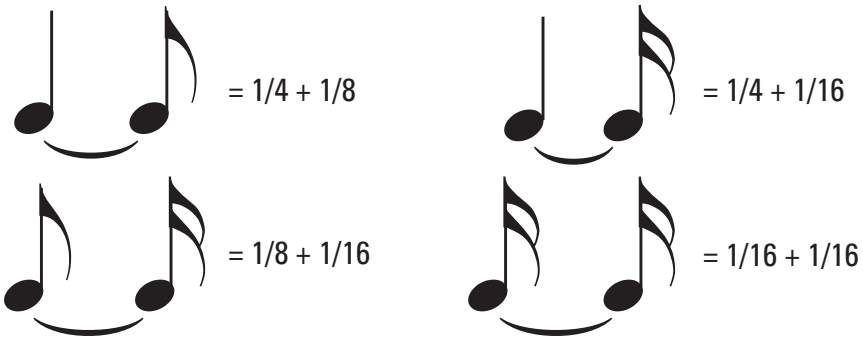


Figure 3-10: Common ties between notes.

The rest

You don't have to play a note on every single beat. Many beats are silent. The *rest* tells you when to be silent and avoid playing a beat. It works exactly like the other rhythmic notations (including the dot) except that you don't make a sound.

Figure 3-11 shows you the rest that's equivalent to the note (a quarter-note rest takes the same amount of time as a quarter note, an eighth-note rest takes the same amount of time as an eighth note, and so on).

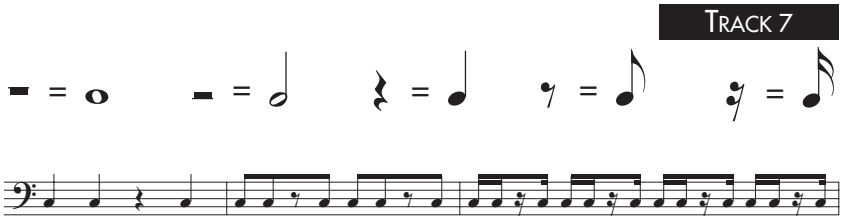


Figure 3-11: The values of note and rest, and their typical application.

On Track 7 you can hear the notes in Figure 3-11. In place of each rest, the word "rest" is spoken (no, you don't have to say "rest" when you encounter one in your own playing; just give it a rest).

Discovering How to Read Music

As you read this sentence, notice that you're not reading letter by letter; you're reading words. You read music the same way. Music notation is recognizable in chunks of notes (or musical words). Certain chunks tend to be repeated again and again. You just need to train your eyes to recognize these patterns. When you get used to seeing and hearing music in chunks, you can get a good idea of what the music on the page sounds (and feels) like just by scanning the page.

Reading music in chunks makes playing much easier. The chunks may be a group of four sixteenth notes or perhaps two eighth notes. Become familiar with the picture of these notes (or the way they look when grouped together) for faster recognition (see Figure 3-12), and practice playing and singing them to the click of your metronome. (For more on metronomes, check out the earlier section "Using the Metronome: You Know, That Tick-Tock Thing.")

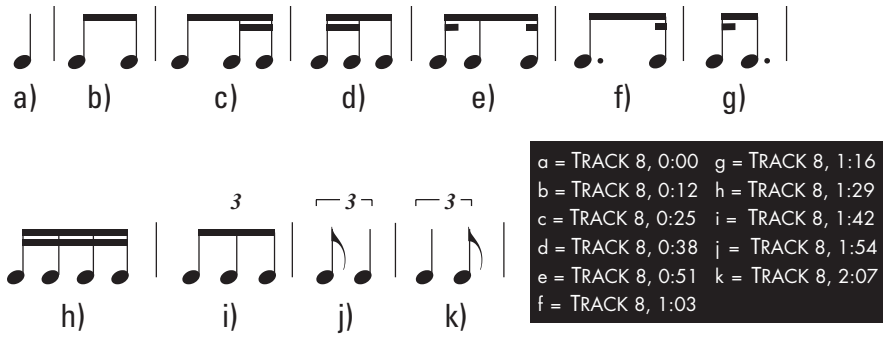


Figure 3-12: Seeing beats as chunks of notes.

ON THE CD

You can hear the notes from Figure 3-12 on Track 8. Memorize what each of the "chunks" of notes look and sound like.

Playing Your First Song While Reading Music

It's about time to apply all the theoretical stuff in this chapter and play some music, wouldn't you say? With sheet music, you usually get one or two different notation devices to work with, such as notes and tablature, or a chord chart and a vocal chart. Alas, I have a special treat for you.

In this section, you get to read and play "Two Too Tight Shoes Blues" using all four notational systems in the same song. The first part is written as regular music notation with tablature underneath so you can play the intended bass part. I also include the vocal chart with the chords written above the words. Finally, you get to play with the chord chart, which shows you the chords for each measure. (Refer to the earlier section "Reading Notation: No Pain, Much Gain" if you need more information on notation.)

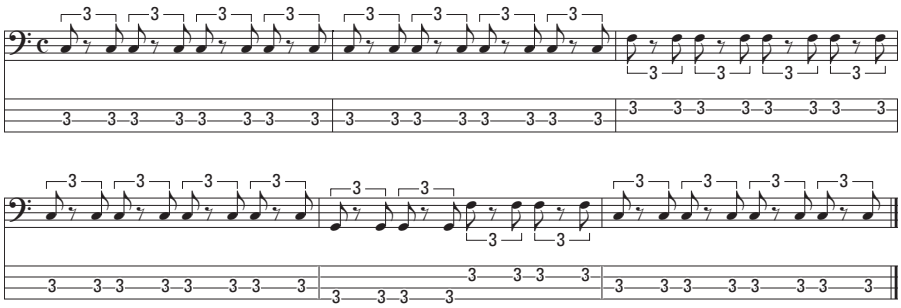
ON THE CD

Listen to the accompanying CD to familiarize yourself with "Two Too Tight Shoes Blues." Then look at the notation in Figure 3-13 to see what the sound looks like. When you're ready, pick up your bass and play along with the song on the CD. Make sure to keep your eyes glued to the page; this exercise is about reading and playing at the same time. When you're comfortable with the song, pan the bass out of the mix and play the song with the track on your own.

A word of advice: If you intend to make reading and playing music your new bedtime-reading activity, make sure you don't crank the amp and keep your entire household up until 2 a.m.

TRACK 9

Music Notation with Tab



Vocal Chart

C
I've got the blues in my shoes.

F C
I've got the blues in my shoes.

G F C
They're too tight — Just two tight shoes.

Chord Chart

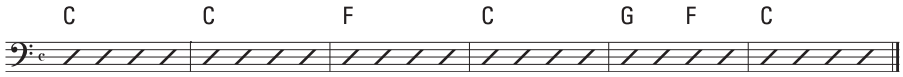


Figure 3-13: Notation for "Two Too Tight Shoes Blues" using four notational systems.

Part II

The Bass-ics of Playing

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant

"Practice produces many benefits for the bass guitarist: smoother scales, faster arpeggios, and apparently the ability to peel a grapefruit with one hand."

In this part . . .

Put on your sweats and strap on your ankle weights — class is now in session. In this part, you discover how to get (and keep) yourself in perfect bass-playing shape. Chapter 4 shows you exercises to coordinate and strengthen your hands, and Chapter 5 helps you work out your brain muscle with some chords and modes.

Chapter 4

Warming Up: Getting Your Hands in Shape to Play

In This Chapter

- Recognizing how your bass produces sound
- Conditioning your right hand for striking
- Strengthening your left hand for fretting

Ready to jam? Strap your bass safely around your shoulder. Place it at the proper angle and height (see Chapter 2), put your hands in position, and get ready to play your heart out.

Wait a minute! Not so fast. Keep that bass strapped on, but before you start playing, it helps to know what makes your bass tick — or, um, sound. In this chapter, I explain how you produce sound on the bass, and how you can strengthen your hands and coordinate them to produce that sound. That's right: One hand needs to know what the other is doing.

REMEMBER

I highly recommend doing all the right- and left-hand exercises in this chapter every day before you play. The more familiar you become with these exercises, the quicker you can cruise through them. Just keep doing them. Nothing warms you up better, except maybe a warm hug on a cool night from a loved one.

Understanding the Sound Your Bass Makes

When you strike a bass string, it vibrates. This sustained vibration is what you hear as the *pitch,* or *tone* (it's also referred to as a *note*). Each note

vibrates at a different speed (called *frequency*). To give you an idea of how fast this vibration is, the open A string vibrates at a frequency of 110 times per second when properly tuned. The *pickup* (the magnet underneath your strings that I talk about in Chapter 1) on your bass translates this string vibration into an electrical charge, which in turn is converted to sound by the amplifier and speaker. (Chapter 15 provides more about amplifiers and speakers.)

Both tension and length determine the pitch of a string. The more tension a string has, the higher its pitch; the less tension a string has, the lower its pitch. (Just think about how your voice gets higher and higher when you get tense.) Similarly, the shorter a string is, the higher its pitch; the longer a string is, the lower its pitch.

When a string is tuned at the proper tension, all you need to do to change the pitch is to change its length. You change the length by fretting the string (no, you don't make it nervous). *Fretting the string* means that you place a left-hand finger on the string and press it onto a fret on the fingerboard, in effect shortening the length of the string. To get the desired bass note, hold the string down on that fret, and strike the string (causing it to vibrate) with a right-hand finger. Voilà! The string is shorter and the pitch (or note) is higher.

Performing Right-Hand Warm-Ups

Just as with any other physical activity, you need to prepare your body for bass playing. Without proper exercise, your hands simply won't be strong enough or coordinated enough to endure long hours of playing. A few minutes a day with the proper exercises go a long way.

Start the exercises in this section by positioning your right hand on the bass. (If you have any questions about your hand positions, check out Chapter 2 for a thorough description.) To avoid any confusion, I use letters for the fingers of the right hand and numbers for the fingers of the left hand. The letters are as follows:

- Index finger = *i*
- Middle finger = *m*

For now, your left hand gets to take a break while your right hand is working out. (To see the numbers I use as substitutes for your left-hand fingers, refer to the later section "Coordinating Your Left Hand with Your Right Hand.") Feel free to use Leftie for scratching various body parts — preferably your own rather than someone else's.

Right-hand same-string strokes

When you play notes on the same string, you need to be able to alternate between your index and middle fingers so you can play notes in rapid succession and with an even tone. The following steps show you how to practice these same-string strokes:

1. **Using the index finger (*i*) or middle finger (*m*) of your right hand, strike the lowest string.**

   Alternate between your *i* and *m* fingers (striking the string with one finger at a time). Try to keep the sound even as you alternate.

2. **Pull your fingertips across the string.**

   Don't lift your fingers really high and slap them down. If you slap the string, you'll create a lot of unwanted fret noise. Don't pluck the string up (like a classical guitar player), either. If you pluck the string up, it will vibrate over the pickup in a way that produces a very thin sound. Instead, your angle of attack (your strike) should be *into* the instrument, making the tone full and round.

   Take a look at Figure 4-1 for the proper strike angle for the right hand. This technique gives you an authoritative and punchy sound, which is exactly what you want as a bass player.

Figure 4-1: Angle of attack for right-hand strike.

A word about terminology: I personally say *strike* rather than *pluck* because the word pluck is used extensively for guitar playing. Guitar players and bassists *attack* their strings differently, and I simply want to differentiate between the two. But don't be surprised to find pluck or similar terms in other books about bass playing.

Play evenly on each string, alternating between your *i* and *m* fingers. Aaaaaah, can you feel those calluses building up? You want those calluses, believe me. You better make your fingers tough and hard so you can strike the string all day long without any pain (or blisters).

As you play, you'll probably notice that your striking fingers are coming to rest on the next lower string when you play the adjacent higher string. This technique is correct; it helps mute the strings that aren't being played. When you play the lowest string (the E string), your fingers should come to rest against your thumb (which, of course, is firmly anchored to the thumb rest or the pickup, right?). Check out Figure 4-2 for the proper striking sequence.

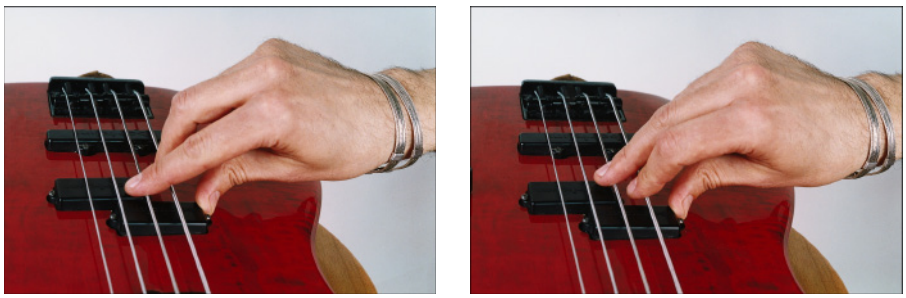


Figure 4-2: Sequence of fingers striking the string.

Controlling the strength in your striking hand: Right-hand accents

This section takes you one step closer to creating music and introduces accents into your playing. No, I'm not talking about a German accent for a polka or a French accent for a chanson; I mean making some of the notes you play stick out from the rest.

Accenting a note means making it slightly louder than the others. To accent a note, just strike the string slightly harder. Accenting allows you to control the volume of each note as you play it, which makes your bass line more interesting.

Don't accent a note too hard, though. If you strike a string too forcefully, the sound becomes distorted, and the tone leaves much to be desired. (It also tires out your hands very quickly.)

Follow these steps to accent a note correctly with either striking finger:

1. **Start playing the E string with alternating *i* and *m* fingers of your right hand.**
2. **Accent each note that you strike with your *i* finger.**
3. **After you get comfortable using your *i* finger, accent each note that you strike with your *m* finger.**
4. **Repeat this exercise on the A string, and then move on to the D string and G string.**

   You want to familiarize yourself with all the strings, because each string has a slightly different feel.

When you're comfortable accenting with either finger, put the previous instructions into exercise form by following these steps:

1. **Play evenly, alternating between your *i* and *m* fingers.**

   Think of this as a four-note sequence where you play *i m i m.*
2. **Accent the first note of each sequence (the underlined *i*), making it *i m i m, i m i m, i m i m,* and so on.**
3. **When you have a handle on playing *i m i m,* start the sequence with *m,* making it *m i m i.***
4. **Accent the first note again (this time, the underlined *m*), making the sequence *m i m i, m i m i, m i m i,* and so on.**
5. **Repeat the preceding steps on all the strings.**

Check out Figure 4-3 for the notation for this exercise.

TRACK 10

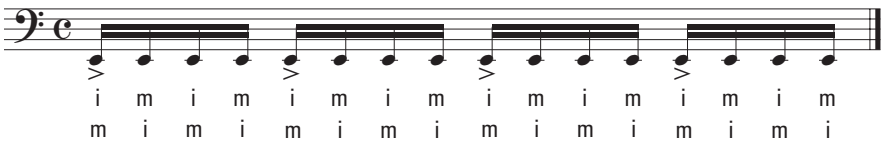


Figure 4-3: Right-hand accents.

Notice how the accented notes in Figure 4-3 are still within a certain range of volume; they don't distort. Listen to Track 10. Your notes should always sound clear and controlled. This exercise sounds the same using either finger, which is, of course, the idea.

Skating across the strings: Right-hand string crossing

The final stage of the right-hand warm-up is called *string crossing.* How do you cross the strings? It's very straightforward. Just remember the following rules:

- Alternate your middle and index fingers when you're striking the same string. (Refer to the exercises in the earlier section "Right-hand same-string strokes.")
- Alternate your middle and index fingers when you're crossing from a *lower* to a *higher* string (that is, the lower to the higher string pitchwise). The lower string is closer to your head and the higher string is closer to your feet. You also can think of it as crossing from the thicker to the thinner string.
- Rake with the same finger when you're crossing from a *higher* to a *lower* string. (*Raking* means striking a string with one finger and then striking the next lower string with the same finger.) Again, keep in mind that going from high to low means going from the thinner string to the thicker string.

Take a look at your alternating fingers when you're crossing from a lower to a higher string. Remember, the lower string is the one on top (nearest your head).

A regular four-string bass is tuned from low to high: E, A, D, and G. Try the following exercise, in that order, for right-hand coordination:

1. **Strike the E string with *i*.**
2. **Strike the A string with *m*.**
3. **Strike the D string with *i*.**
4. **Strike the G string with *m*.**

Now strike the G string again, this time with *i* (alternating on the same string), and rake it all the way across the D, A, and E strings. Keep the rhythm and volume even by making sure that your fingers strike the strings evenly.

After you play the E string with *i,* continue with the second half of the exercise:

1. **Strike the E string with *m*.**
2. **Strike the A string with *i*.**
3. **Strike the D string with *m*.**
4. **Strike the G string with *i*.**

Now strike the G string again with *m* (alternating on the same string), and rake it all the way across the D, A, and E strings. Again, keep the rhythm and

volume even in both directions by making sure that your fingers strike the strings evenly.

Listen to this exercise on Track 11 of the CD. You won't hear a difference in the sound of the strings as the fingers alternate. Listen to the evenness of the volume of the notes and to the timing between the notes. The timing is identical whether you're going up or down on the strings.

Coordinating Your Left Hand with Your Right Hand

The job of your left hand is to press down on the string at the appropriate fret, which gives you the desired pitch, while the right hand strikes the proper string at the same time and produces the sound. You see bass players use a variety of left-hand positions, but without a doubt, the most economical position is the one that uses all four fingers on the frets (while the thumb remains on the back of the neck with as little pressure as possible). In this section, I show you how to train your left hand for some finger independence.

The left-hand fingers are numbered in the figures throughout this book as follows:

- Index finger = 1
- Middle finger = 2
- Ring finger = 3
- Pinkie (little finger) = 4

Doing finger permutations

Get ready for one of the best exercises you'll ever find for bassists: finger permutations. The *finger permutation* exercise gives you a workout for every possible combination of finger sequences on your left hand. Here's how it works:

1. **Position your hand on the neck of the bass so that your index finger (1) is on low G (the 3rd fret on the E string).**
2. **Spread your fingers so that each one covers one fret.**

   Try to keep your left hand as relaxed as possible as you're covering the frets. This way your hand doesn't tire, and you can move it more quickly.
3. **Press the notes that are under your fingers, one finger and fret at a time, in this order: 1 2 3 4.**

   Your right hand strikes the string to sound each note.

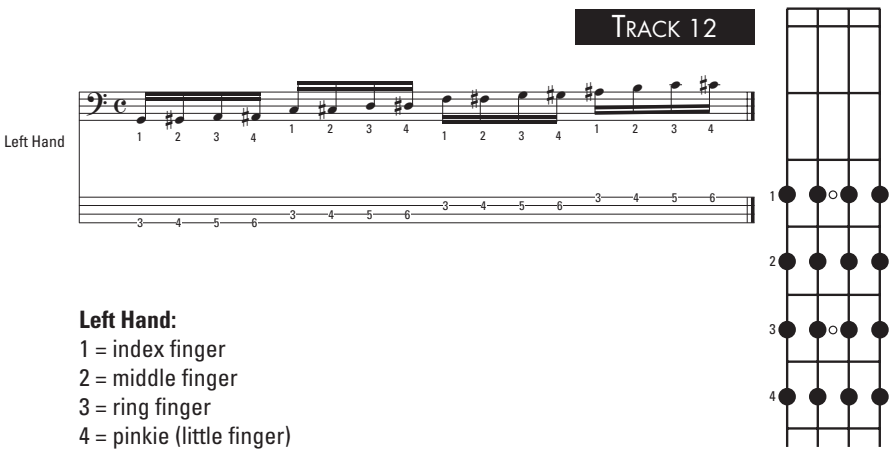
4. **Repeat the process on the A string (the next string), the D string, and then on the G string.**
5. **When you complete this finger combination on every string, go back to the E string and do the next combination.**

Table 4-1 shows you the complete list of left-hand permutations (all the fingerings starting with 1, and then 2, 3, and 4). Practice one column at a time, and repeat the process until you do all the combinations (and I mean *every* one). These exercises give your left hand the desired coordination and strength in only a few short minutes to play all those hip bass lines I show you in Part IV.

Table 4-1 Left-Hand Permutations

Starting with the Index Finger	*Starting with the Middle Finger*	*Starting with the Ring Finger*	*Starting with the Pinkie*
1 2 3 4	2 1 3 4	3 1 2 4	4 1 2 3
1 2 4 3	2 1 4 3	3 1 4 2	4 1 3 2
1 3 2 4	2 3 1 4	3 2 1 4	4 2 1 3
1 3 4 2	2 3 4 1	3 2 4 1	4 2 3 1
1 4 2 3	2 4 1 3	3 4 1 2	4 3 1 2
1 4 3 2	2 4 3 1	3 4 2 1	4 3 2 1

Figure 4-4 shows an example of the first line (the first combination) of the left-hand permutations. You can try these exercises on any area of the neck of the bass. On the CD, the exercises start on low G (with the index finger on the 3rd fret of the E string), but don't limit yourself to that area.



Left Hand:
1 = index finger
2 = middle finger
3 = ring finger
4 = pinkie (little finger)

Figure 4-4: First line (1 2 3 4) of left-hand permutations.

ON THE CD

Listen to Track 12 to hear what the first line of left-hand permutations sounds like.

Muting the strings to avoid the infamous hum

When you play, you may find that some strings vibrate even though you didn't strike them. *Sympathetic vibration* (the official name for this hum) is a natural phenomenon. You can silence, or *mute,* any string by touching it lightly with either your left hand (preferably with more than one finger) or your right hand, or even with both hands. As you refine your muting technique, sympathetic vibration will become less and less of a problem.

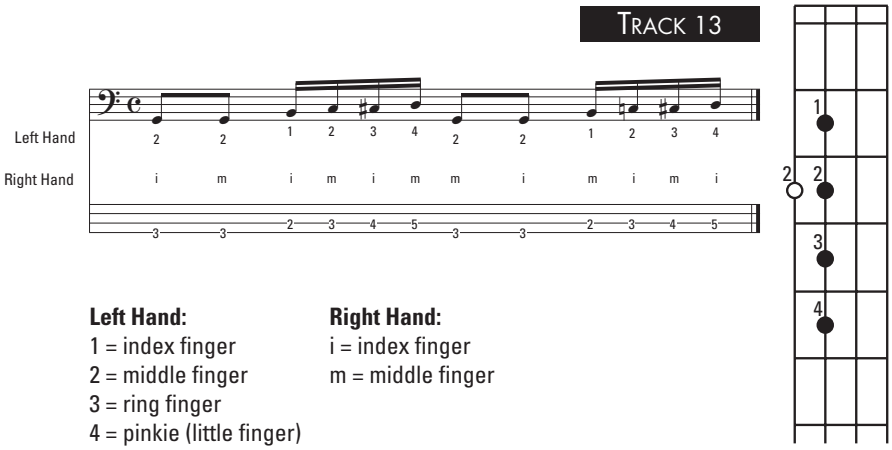
For example, if you strike a low G on the E string, the open G string vibrates as well. Just keep your left-hand fingers in (light) touch with the strings, and you won't hear any vibration. Take a look at Figure 4-5 to see what muting with the left hand looks like. Notice how the undersides of the fingers touch the other strings, preventing them from vibrating.

Figure 4-5: Left hand playing low G while muting the other strings.

Putting it all together

Try the simple exercise in Figure 4-6 that coordinates the fingering of the left hand with the striking of the right hand.

Make sure your right hand alternates properly. You start this exercise with a different finger on each repetition (alternating *i* and *m* fingers). As for your left hand, it doesn't have to shift for the entire exercise as long as you use all four left-hand fingers properly.



Left Hand:
1 = index finger
2 = middle finger
3 = ring finger
4 = pinkie (little finger)

Right Hand:
i = index finger
m = middle finger

Figure 4-6: Practice exercise for combining the right and left hands.

You can hear the very cool exercise from Figure 4-6 on Track 13. This exercise doubles as a hip groove. Who says exercises have to be boring?

The notation and the tab (tablature) show you where to place the notes. If you use the grid (see Chapter 2), you can transpose this pattern into any key.

Chapter 5

Understanding Major and Minor Structures

In This Chapter

- Playing scales
- Structuring chords
- Discovering the seven main modes
- Using chromatic notes
- Building a groove with dead notes
- Playing around with accompaniments

Sing a note, any note. Go ahead. "Lah!" Now use this note to sing the first line of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." You have just established a tonal center. The *tonal center* is the most important note of a tune. The tonal center often begins the tune (as is the case when you sing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"), but not always. ("Happy Birthday," for example, doesn't start on the tonal center.) Almost all tunes, however, end on the tonal center. Just sing both tunes all the way through, and you end on the tonal center of each.

All the other notes in the tune relate to the tonal center and sound as though they're gravitating toward it. They gravitate toward the center in two basic ways: via a major scale, or via a minor scale. These two *tonalities* (sounds) rule the world of music. The major scale has a happy, bright sound, and the minor scale sounds dark and brooding. Without the contrast between major and minor tonalities, music would be about as interesting as a picture of white clouds on a white background.

Subtle variations exist within the major and minor tonalities, but the basics remain the same. In the first part of this chapter, I explain some technical stuff, such as scales (also called modes) and chords. Don't worry, I promise not to bore you to tears. You'll use all the information in this chapter again and again when you're playing bass. In the later part of the chapter, you get to apply scales and chords the way they're used in a real-life playing situation: when you're playing a song.

Building Major and Minor Scales

A *scale* is a series of notes (usually seven different notes) starting with a tonal center (root) and ending with its octave, the eighth note, also the root. As an example, you can play a scale from C to the octave above or below it, the next C. Check out Figure 5-1 for an example of a scale.

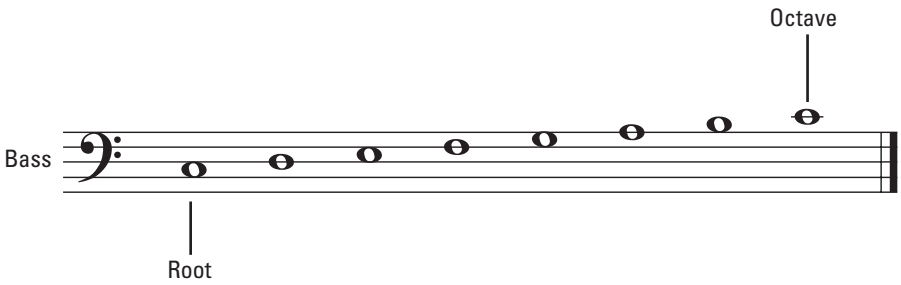


Figure 5-1: Notation and placement of a scale.

Musicians also refer to the entire group of notes including the root and its octave as an *octave.* Unfortunately the same term is used for both, just to confuse beginners.

An *interval* is the distance between any two notes you play. The notes of any interval — and an octave is one example of an interval — are always in the same relationship to each other on the neck of the bass; they're always positioned the same way on the fret board. You can finger an octave the same way, no matter where the first note occurs. Take a look at Chapter 2 for a listing of intervals and their positions.

A half-step interval is the distance from one fret to the next on the bass neck. A whole-step interval is the distance between two frets on the bass neck (see Chapter 1 for more on frets). One octave equals 12 half steps.

Most scales are made up of sequences of notes in half-step and whole-step intervals. As is the case with intervals, the shapes of the scales remain constant in any position on the fingerboard of the bass guitar. If you know a scale in one position, you know it in all positions. Here's a little hint: Don't tell any of the other musicians that you don't have to think about each individual scale; they'll be jealous, and they may decide to pay you less.

Major scales

The major scale has seven notes arranged in whole- and half-step intervals within one octave.

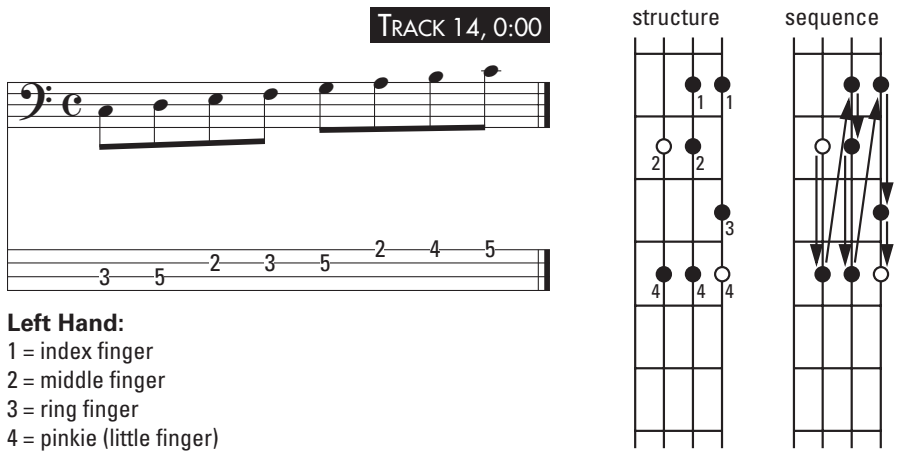
- The starting note is the *root* (the tonal center). It's also called the *1,* for the first note of the scale.
- All the notes (*scale tones*) between the 1 and the octave are numbered in sequence. So the major scale consists of the root (or 1), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.
- The note after the 7 is the *octave.* The octave is the same note as the 1 but higher. You can use this octave as a new 1 (root) for repeating the first scale an octave higher.

  When you describe the notes of the major scale, you call them the root, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and octave.

Here's the structure of the major scale. (I label the whole steps with "W" and the half steps with "H" to show you the distance from one note to the next in the major scale.)

Root <**W**> 2nd <**W**> 3rd <**H**> 4th <**W**> 5th <**W**> 6th <**W**> 7th <**H**> octave

Figure 5-2 shows you the structure of the major scale on a grid. (See Chapter 2 for a description of the grid.) The open circle represents the root, and the solid dots represent the other scale tones (notes).



Left Hand:
1 = index finger
2 = middle finger
3 = ring finger
4 = pinkie (little finger)

Figure 5-2: The structure of the major scale on a grid.

You can play the major scale anywhere on the fingerboard, without shifting, as long as you have three strings and four frets at your disposal. Going up, if you start the scale with your middle finger, you can complete it without shifting your left hand. (For more on shifting, see the later section "Chromatic tones outside the box.") Going down, you start the scale with your pinkie.

The major scale structure forms the basis for all your other scales and their intervals, which means that the intervals of all the other scales are compared

to the major scale intervals. When a note deviates from the notes in the major scale, it's specially marked with a ♭ or a ♯. Here are the guidelines:

- When you lower any note by a half step, the note is *flatted* (shown with the symbol ♭ next to the note or number).
- When you raise any note by a half step, the note is *sharped* (shown with the symbol ♯ next to the note or number).

Minor scales

Like the major scale, minor scales have seven different notes within an octave, but the whole and half steps are arranged in a different order. The *natural minor scale* is the basis of all other minor scales. Here's the sequence of the notes in a natural minor scale:

Root, 2, ♭3, 4, 5, ♭6, ♭7, and octave

Notice that the 3rd, 6th, and 7th notes in the natural minor scale are each a half step lower than the 3rd, 6th, and 7th notes in the major scale. The ♭3 (flat 3) is the fundamental note in a minor scale. It defines the scale as minor instead of major; this note is often referred to in music theory as a minor 3rd.

Here's the structure of the natural minor scale:

Root <**W**> 2nd <**H**> ♭3rd <**W**> 4th <**W**> 5th <**H**> ♭6th <**W**> ♭7th <**W**> octave

Start playing this scale with your index finger. You can play the natural minor scale in one position (without having to shift your left hand). Figure 5-3 shows you the structure of the natural minor scale.

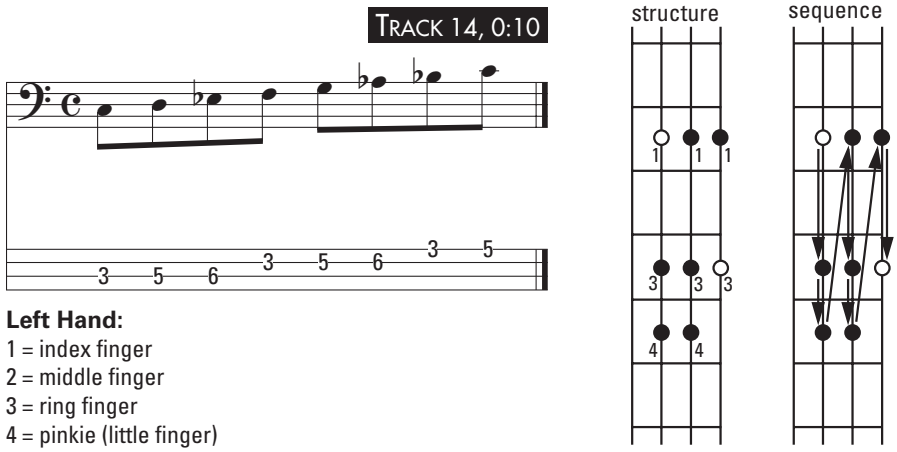


Figure 5-3: The structure of the natural minor scale.

Figures 5-2 and 5-3 are on Track 14 of the CD. Listen for the differences between the major and minor scales. Play along with the track and listen to each scale until you can tell them apart by ear.

Building Chords: One Note at a Time, Please

A *chord* is a combination of three or more notes taken from a related scale. Piano players and guitarists often play several notes of a chord simultaneously. For example, a guitarist may play a three-note chord on the first beat of a measure and let the complex chord-sound (or harmony) ring out for the rest of the measure. But bassists usually take a different approach when playing the notes of a chord. When playing bass, you generally execute chords by playing the notes one at a time. You can play the notes in any sequence and using any number of rhythmic patterns. (See Chapter 3 for different rhythmic patterns.)

Triads: The three most important notes of a chord

The *triad* is the basic chord form, consisting of the three most important notes of any scale: root, 3rd, and 5th. This structure is called a *triad* because it has three notes. You can find the notes for the triad by playing any scale up to the 5th note, skipping every other note. In other words, you play the root, skip the 2nd note, play the 3rd note, skip the 4th note, and play the 5th note.

You can tell whether a scale is major or minor merely by listening to its triad. A major triad has a regular 3 (1, 3, 5) and produces a happy sound. A minor triad has a ♭3 (1, ♭3, 5) and produces a sad sound.

Musicians sometimes refer to triads as *chords.* For instance, a major triad may be referred to as a major chord. (Note that a more complex combination of notes in the major tonality may also be called a major chord.)

Major triads

The *major triad* is the chord that's related to the major scale. Just play the root, 3rd, and 5th notes of the major scale to get a major triad. You can easily play it in one position (with no shifts in your left hand). Make sure you start the major triad with your middle finger.

To see the form of the major triad, check out Figure 5-4. The open circle represents the root, and the solid dots represent the other chord notes. You may include the octave root (as in this example) if you like the sound. It's the same note (an octave higher) as the root and won't change your triad one bit.

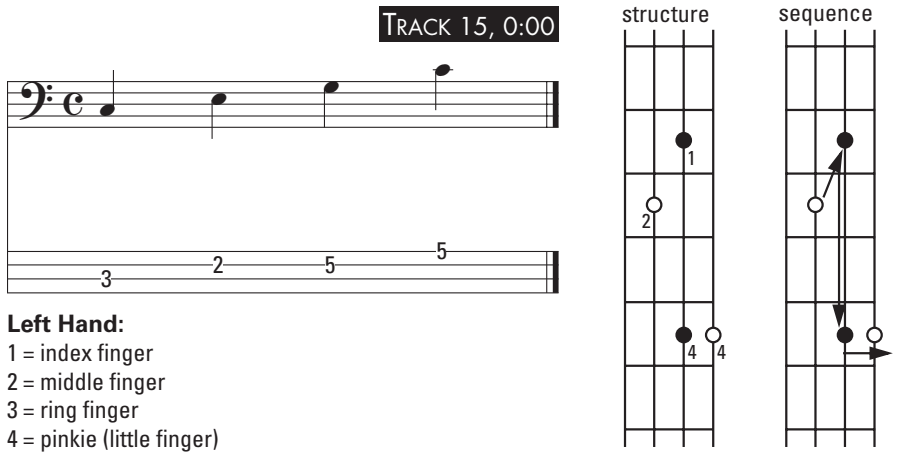


Figure 5-4: Structure and sequence of the major triad.

Left Hand:
1 = index finger
2 = middle finger
3 = ring finger
4 = pinkie (little finger)

Take a look at Figure 5-5 for some examples of major triad *accompaniments* (bass lines you play to support soloists). The simple structure of the major chord (major triad) gives you enough notes to choose from to play some hip accompaniments.

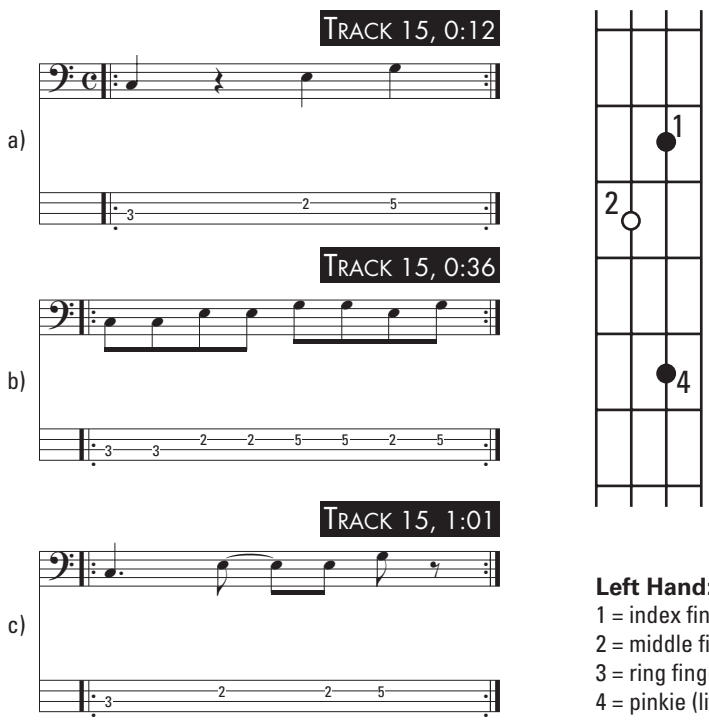


Figure 5-5: Accompaniments using the major triad.

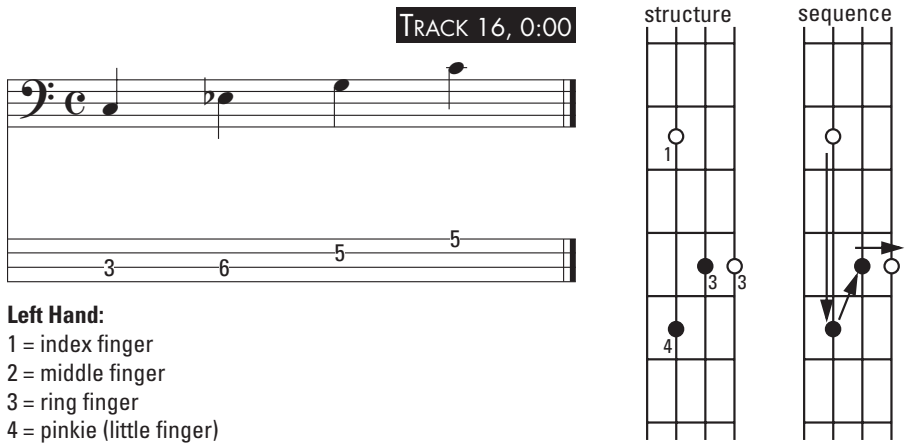
Left Hand:
1 = index finger
2 = middle finger
3 = ring finger
4 = pinkie (little finger)

ON THE CD

You can hear the major triad and its subsequent accompaniments on Track 15 (Figures 5-4 and 5-5). Triads are a simple, yet effective method to accompany a tune.

Minor triads

The *minor triad* comes from the minor scale. You construct the minor triad by playing the root, 3rd, and 5th notes of the minor scale, which translates into the root, ♭3, and 5. You can play any minor triad in one position (no shifts with the left hand), and you start it with your index finger. Check out Figure 5-6 for the form of the minor triad.



Left Hand:
1 = index finger
2 = middle finger
3 = ring finger
4 = pinkie (little finger)

Figure 5-6: Structure and sequence of the minor triad.

Like the major triad, the minor triad gives you plenty of notes to choose from for some cool accompaniments over minor tonalities. See Figure 5-7 for some examples.

REMEMBER

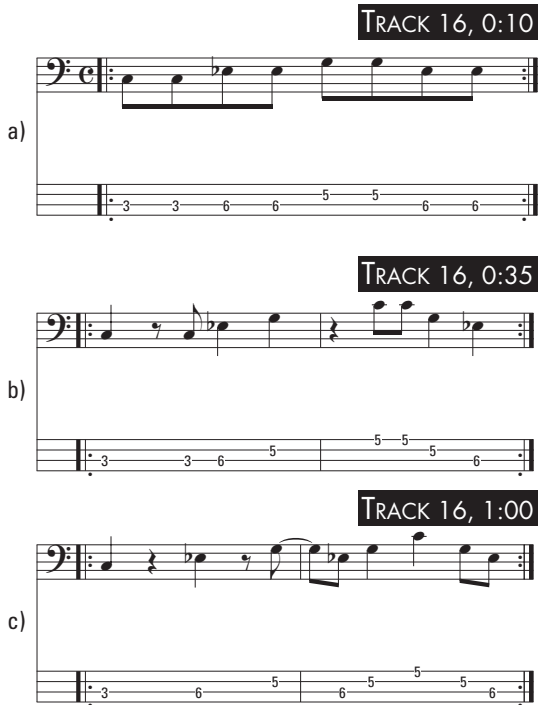
You can play any of the grooves from Figures 5-5 and 5-7 in any key (not just in C), without changing the *shape* of the grooves (the pattern of the notes in relation to each other). For example, try starting on a different note, such as on D, when you play the note patterns shown on the grids in these figures.

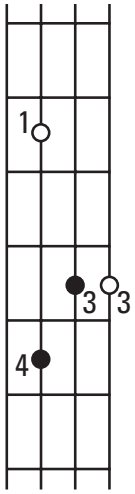
ON THE CD

You can hear the minor triad and accompaniments on Track 16 (Figures 5-6 and 5-7).

Applying the triad to a song

You may think the triad is a simple, unsophisticated device and certainly not the stuff of the big leagues. Well, think again. If you listen to a song like "Under the Boardwalk" or "Jamaica Farewell" or a number of other megahits, you quickly realize that this seemingly unassuming device packs quite a punch.





Left Hand:
1 = index finger
2 = middle finger
3 = ring finger
4 = pinkie (little finger)

Figure 5-7: Accompaniments using the minor triad.

ON THE CD

On Track 17 you hear a song that has the bass laying down the triads as the perfect accompaniment. As you listen, follow along in Figure 5-8 (be sure to repeat the first line). All you have to do is get your fretting hand in position to play a major triad (starting with the middle finger on the root) or a minor triad (starting with the index finger on the root) as I've described earlier in this chapter. When you're comfortable with this, play the triads along with the song. Eventually, when you're familiar with the bass part, pan the music so you don't hear the bass and play the part along with the track. After that, it's only a matter of time before you can hang your own gold record on your wall.

TRACK 17

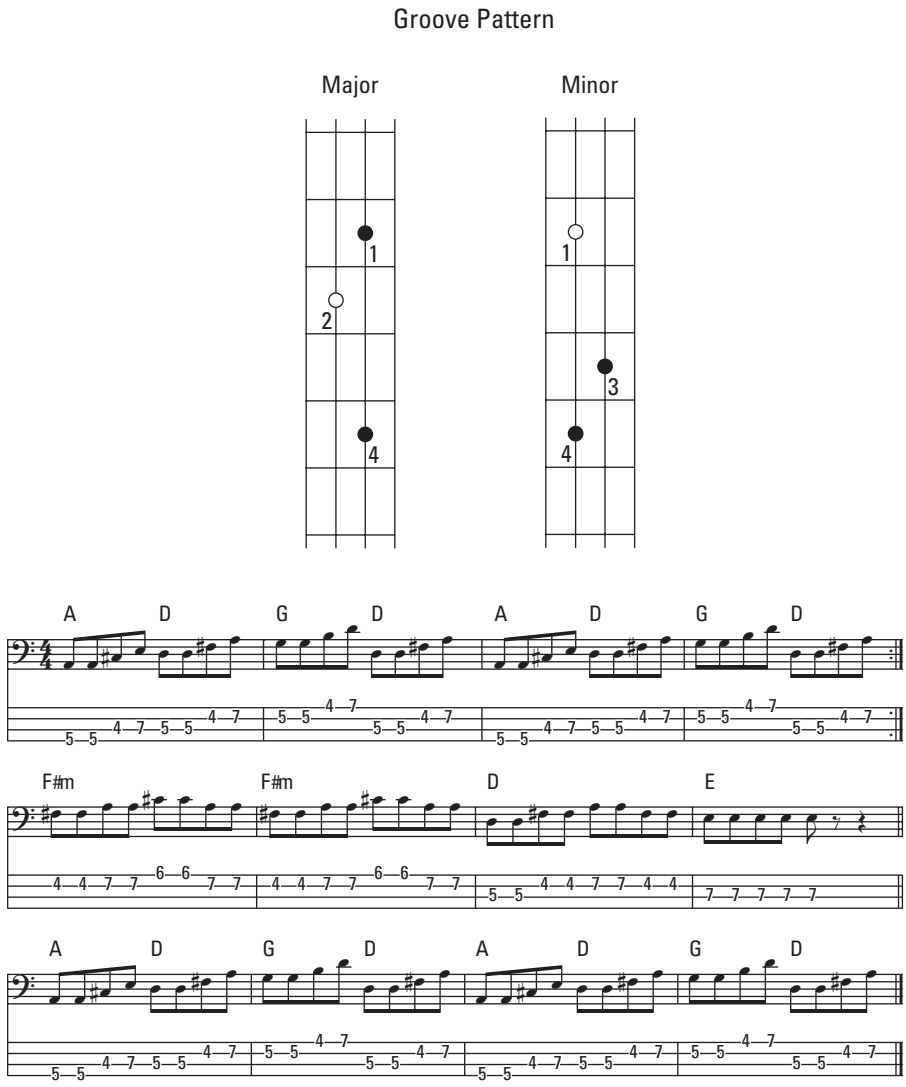
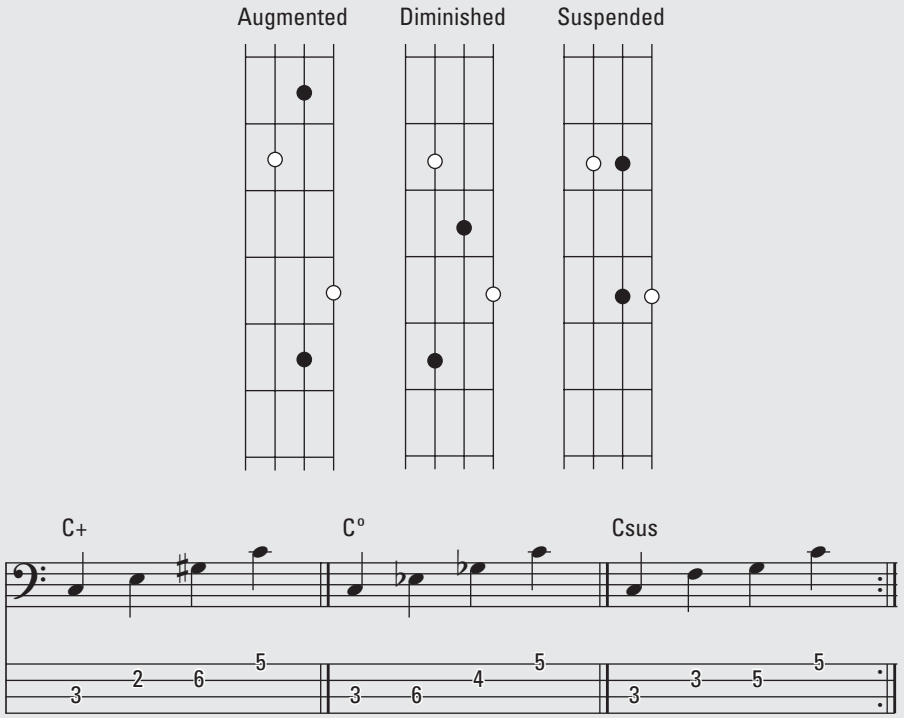


Figure 5-8: Notation for a song with triad accompaniment.

Augmented, diminished, and suspended chords

The most common chords by far are major and minor, and you're getting a good handle on them in this chapter, but every now and then you may run into one of three other kinds of triads: an *augmented* chord (marked with a plus sign next to the letter of the chord), a *diminished* chord (marked with a circle next to the letter of the chord), or a *suspended* chord (marked with a "sus" next to the letter of the chord). When you see one of these symbols, all you have to do is change one note in your triad and you're good to go. An augmented chord raises the 5th by a half step and makes it an augmented 5th. A diminished chord lowers the 5th by a half step, making it a diminished 5th. A suspended chord, also called a *sus* chord, "suspends" the 3rd and plays the 4th instead.

The following figure gives you the shapes of all three chords. Just a piece of advice: Don't try to talk your way out of a mistake by claiming to experiment with "augminished chords." It won't work . . . I've tried.



Seventh chords: Filling out the triad

The 7th chord has one more note than the triad: You guessed it, the 7. The sound of the 7th chord is a little more complex than the sound of a triad, though.

Contemporary music makes extensive use of the 7, and you frequently play the 7th chord in your accompaniments. As with triads, the 7th chord is based on a scale (usually the major or minor scale). You find the notes of any 7th chord by playing the scale and skipping every other note: You play the root, you skip the 2nd note, you play the 3rd note, you skip the 4th note, you play the 5th note, you skip the 6th note, and you play the 7th note. The notes in any chord are called *chord tones.*

The four most commonly used 7th chords are the major, minor, dominant, and half-diminished chords. Table 5-1 gives you the structures of these four main 7th chords.

TECHNICAL STUFF

In contemporary popular music, the term *dominant* refers to the tonality of the chord and not just to the function of that chord. A dominant chord is simply a major triad and a flatted 7.

Table 5-1 The Main 7th Chord Structures

Chord Name	*Chord Tones*
Major	Root - 3 - 5 - 7
Dominant	Root - 3 - 5 - ♭7
Minor	Root - ♭3 - 5 - ♭7
Half-Diminished	Root - ♭3 - ♭5 - ♭7

As Table 5-1 shows, the root, 3, and 5 follow either the basic major or basic minor structure. The *flatted 7* is what differentiates the dominant chord from the major chord. The *flatted 5* is what differentiates the half-diminished chord from the minor chord. Figure 5-9 shows the chords with their related scales.

ON THE CD

Listen to Track 18 to hear what each chord with its appropriate scale sounds like. The notes of each chord overlap with the notes of the proper scale, as you see in Figure 5-9.

The word *scale* is interchangeable with the word *mode;* they both mean exactly the same thing.

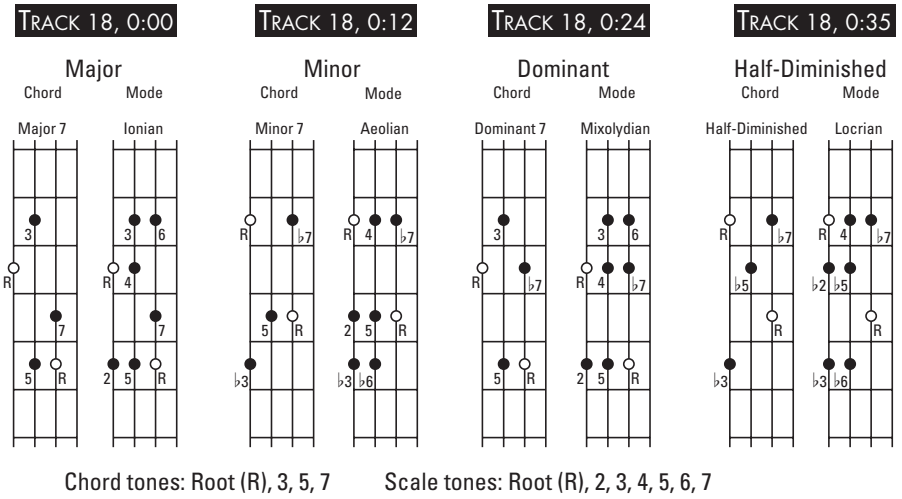


Figure 5-9: Scales of the major, minor, dominant, and half-diminished chords.

Getting your kicks with boogie licks

So many notes, so little time. What do all these 7th chords and scales (modes) mean to you? A lot! In this section, I show you a boogie bass line that's a great demonstration of how you can combine the chords and scales to create memorable sounds. This little ditty ought to be very familiar to you. Just listen to a tune like "In the Mood" and you hear it right away.

The bass plays the 7th chord, but in addition to the basic chord, you add one note, the 6th of the scale. The bass line is root-3-5-6-7-6-5-3 in a dominant formation. (Look for the "Dominant" chord/mode combination in Figure 5-9.) You see? Just one little added note from the mode and your plain-old 7th chord is transformed into one of the most recognized bass lines on the planet.

Figure 5-10 gives you the structure of the bass line. You can get this boogie sound anywhere on your fingerboard without changing the structure (or the fingering).

ON THE CD

Get your boogie boots on for Track 19; you get to work out with a real honest-to-goodness boogie song. Start the pattern on the root that corresponds to the chart in Figure 5-10. First listen closely to Track 19, and, when you're ready, simply play along with the recording. Eventually, you'll be ready to pan the bass out of the mix and be the *soul* provider . . . of the bass line that is.

TRACK 19

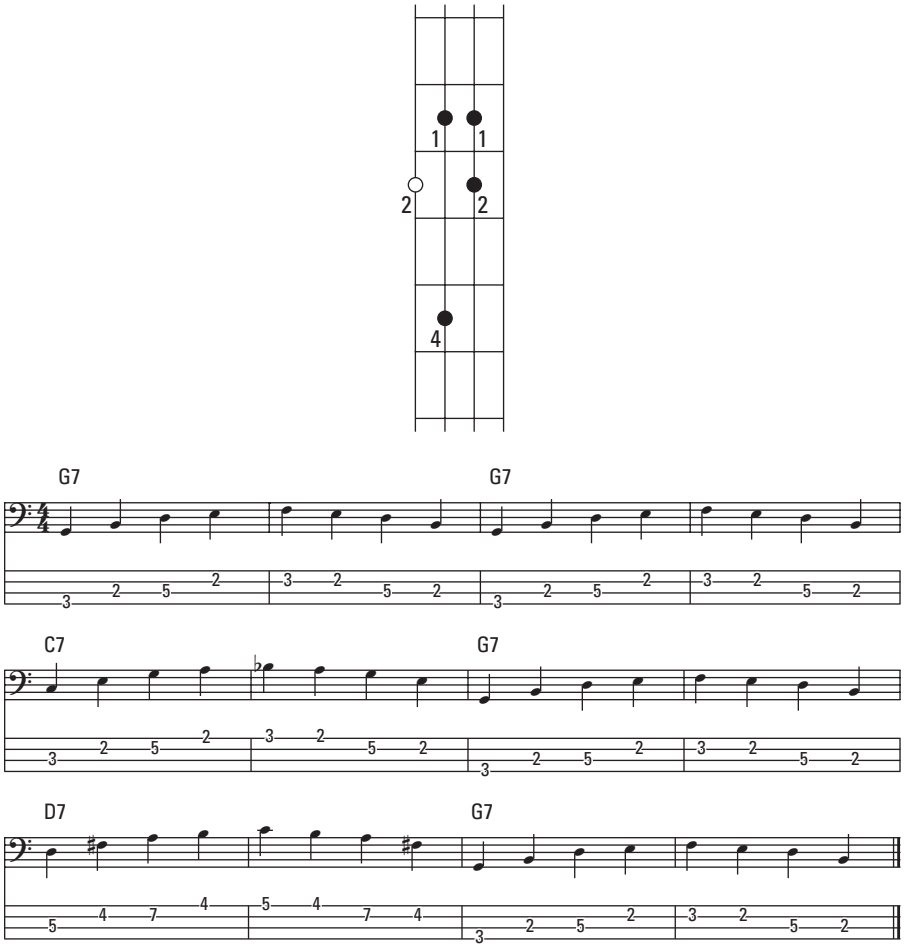


Figure 5-10: Boogie bass line pattern and boogie chart.

Spicing Up Your Sound: The Seven Main Modes (Scales)

Seven more scales?! Don't panic. Four of them are from the previous section — the major, dominant, minor, and half-diminished scales — so playing three

more is a piece of apple pie with ice cream. These new scales are closely related to the previous ones, and with all these scales at your fingertips, you get more choices in terms of flavor, or *color* (it's like different shades of blue, for example). Think of starting with the same basic cooking recipe but adding different flavors (different sounds) to change it slightly.

In almost every song, one mode (scale) predominates. *Mode* is simply a fancy word for scale. When you play with other musicians, the first song may be primarily dominant, the next minor, and the next major. Know the mode you're in, and you're well on your way to providing great bass lines for any song.

Figure 5-11 shows the seven main modes and how they relate to the four main chords (major, minor, dominant, and half-diminished).

ON THE CD

On Track 20 you can hear all seven main scales in Figure 5-11 and the chord they relate to. Notice how the major and the minor chord each have more than one possible matching scale.

You can see how the modes are related when you compare them to either the major or minor scale. Take a look at Table 5-2 to see how to adjust the major or minor scale to create each of the modes on the fingerboard.

Table 5-2 The Mode Families

Mode	*Relation to Major or Minor Scale*
Ionian (major)	Major scale
Lydian	Major scale with sharp 4th
Mixolydian (dominant)	Major scale with flat 7th
Aeolian (natural minor)	Minor scale
Dorian	Minor scale with regular 6th
Phrygian	Minor scale with flat 2nd
Locrian (half-diminished)	Minor scale with flat 2nd and flat 5th

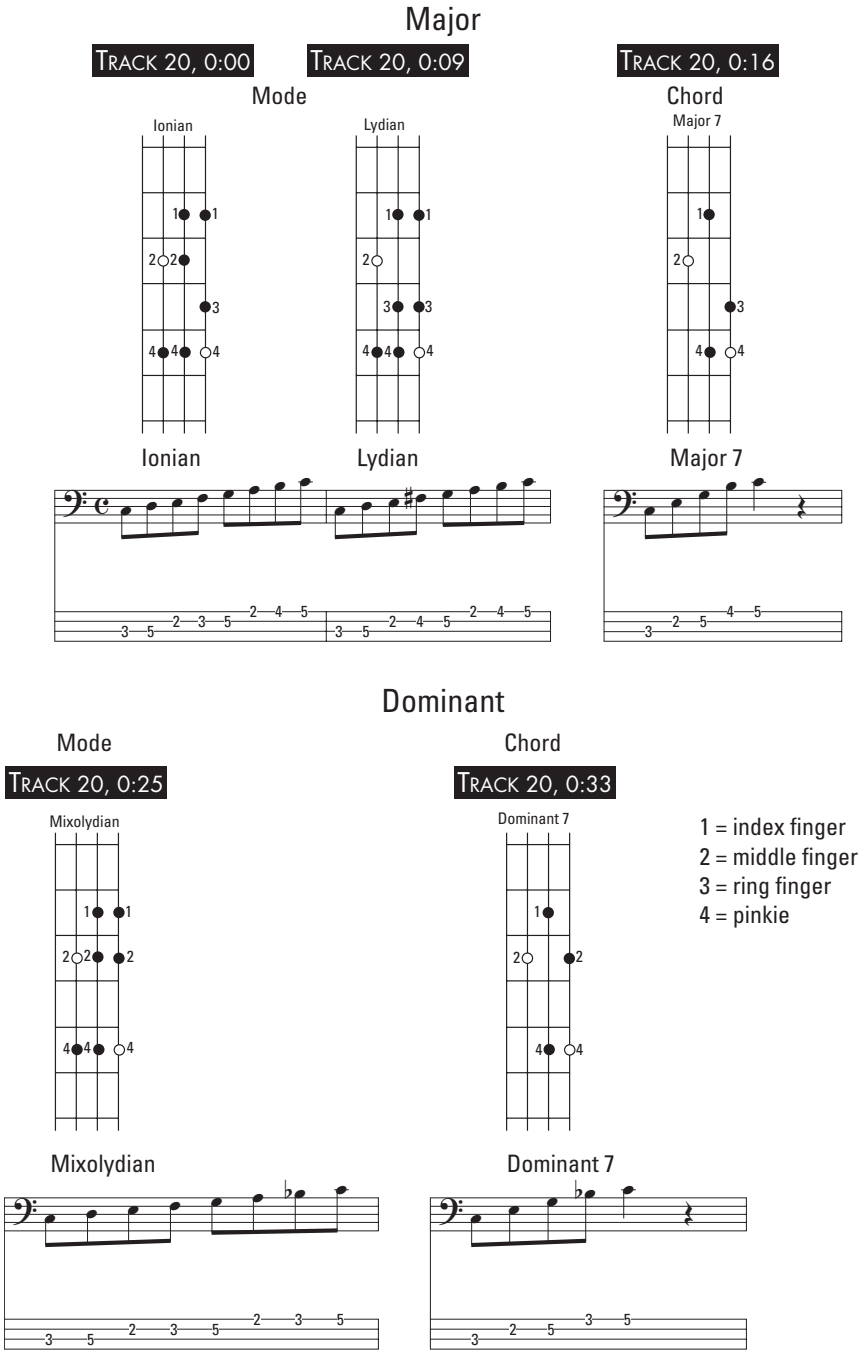
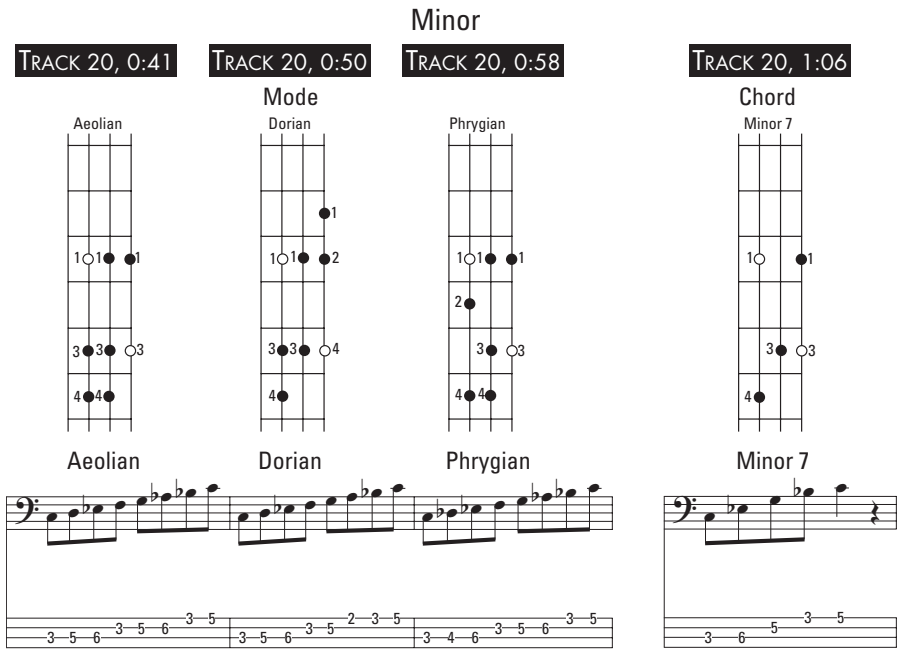


Figure 5-11: The scale/chord combinations.



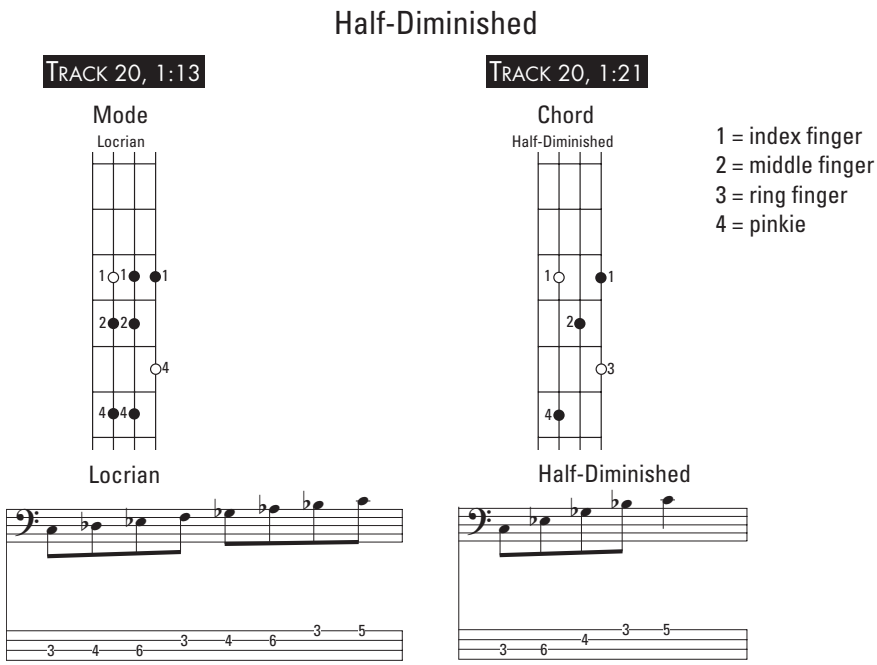


Figure 5-11: (continued)

The alpha and omega of the modes

The modes are easy to understand when you know their origin.

The C-major scale (C, D, E, F, G, A, B, and C), which is also known as *C Ionian,* starts and ends on the 1 of the scale — the C. If you play the exact same C scale but start on its 2nd note (D), you end up with the *D-Dorian mode* (D, E, F, G, A, B, C, and D). Even though D Dorian has the same notes as C Ionian, it sounds different — somewhat sad. A tune based on D Dorian also will sound sad.

If you start and end on the 3rd note of the C-major scale (E), you end up with the *E-Phrygian mode* (E, F, G, A, B, C, D, and E). You hear a sound that's different from the Ionian and Dorian modes, even though the notes are the same. It sounds somewhat exotic.

If you start and end on the 4th note of the C-major scale (F), you get the *F-Lydian mode* (F, G, A, B, C, D, E, and F). This mode produces a sound that's somewhat similar to the sound made by the Ionian mode — major and happy.

If you start and end on the 5th note of the C-major scale (G), you get the *G-Mixolydian mode* (G, A, B, C, D, E, F, and G). This mode is the dominant scale.

If you start and end on the 6th note of the C-major scale (A), you get the *A-Aeolian mode* (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and A), which also is your natural minor scale.

If you start and end on the 7th note of the C-major scale (B), you get the *B-Locrian mode* (B, C, D, E, F, G, A, and B), which produces a somewhat harsh sound.

As you can see, each mode starts on a different note of the C scale but uses the same notes. Also notice that each of these modes has its own 7th chord — the 1, 3, 5, and 7 — and each chord sounds uniquely like the mode it's related to. For instance, the 1, 3, 5, and 7 of C Ionian are C, E, G, and B — a major 7th chord. The 1, 3, 5, and 7 of D Dorian are D, F, A, and C — a minor 7th chord.

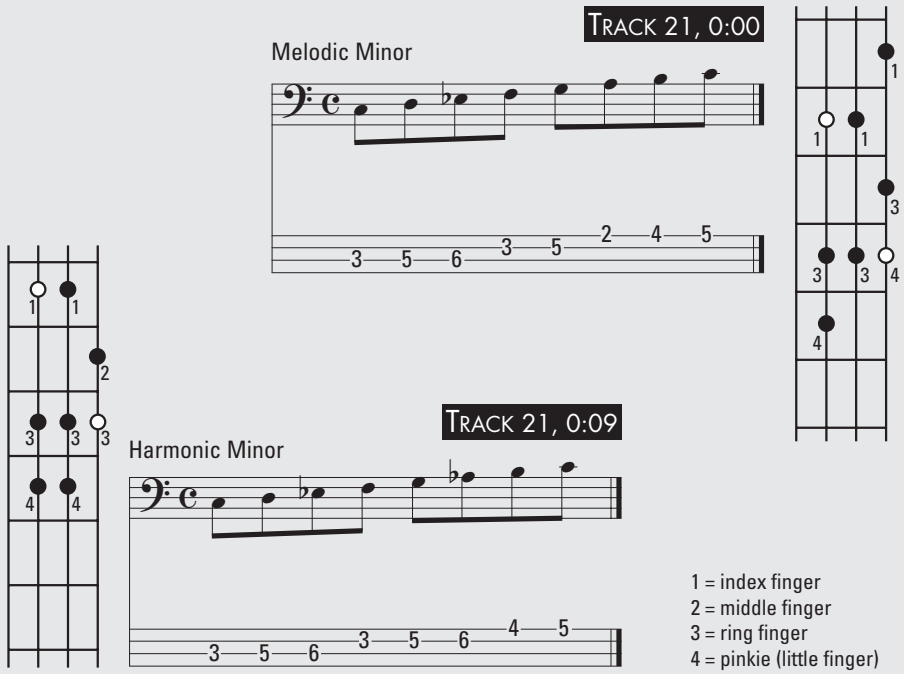
The common order of these modes is: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian. Sounds Greek to you? It actually is!

You can play all the modes, with their chords, in one position on the bass (no shifts in the left hand) with the exception of the Dorian mode. In the case of the Dorian mode, you need to make a small, one-fret shift with your left hand in order to execute the mode.

I refer to this position — playing without shifting the left hand — as the *box* because the notes fit into a boxlike pattern on the fingerboard (or look like a box on the grid). When you play a groove (see Chapter 6 for more on creating grooves), you want to keep the pattern within the box as much as possible so your playing is smooth and efficient. Practice each of these seven modes (scales) on your bass and listen carefully for the unique sound that each one produces.

Melodic and harmonic minor scales

The melodic and harmonic minor scales are special cases in the scale business. Both scales are a sort of hybrid of the minor and major tonalities. The *melodic minor scale* is a natural minor scale with a regular 7 instead of a ♭7 and a regular 6 instead of a ♭6 (see related figure). The *harmonic minor scale* is a natural minor scale with a regular 7 instead of a ♭7 (see related figure). You're likely to encounter the melodic and harmonic minor scales when playing melodies in a minor tonality.



Most bass lines (the notes you use in accompanying a tune) are made up primarily of notes from the scales and chords in this section. Keep referring to Tables 5-1 and 5-2 and to Figure 5-11, because being familiar with the scale/chord combinations allows you to create great bass lines. See Part IV for info on how to apply the scale/chord combination when you're playing music.

Using Chromatic Tones: All the Other Notes

When you play a bass line, you're not limited to the notes in the main modes; you can supplement them with notes outside the mode. The extra notes that fall within the box — the *chromatic tones* — are the most convenient notes for supplementing your modes.

Chromatic tones normally refer to any sequence of notes moving in half steps, either up or down, one fret at a time. For bass lines, however, chromatic tones refer to the notes outside the regular mode. These notes are a half step away from a scale tone.

Chromatic tones within the box

Figure 5-12 shows a bass line in a major tonality using a chromatic tone. You don't need to shift your left hand to reach these chromatic notes, because they're in the box. You can use these notes as quick links to one of the chord tones (root, 3, 5, 7).

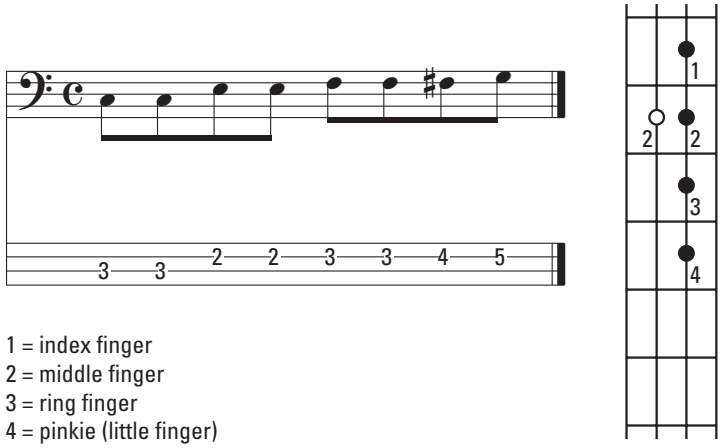


Figure 5-12: Using a chromatic tone in a major bass line.

Figure 5-13 shows you a bass line in a minor tonality using a chromatic tone.

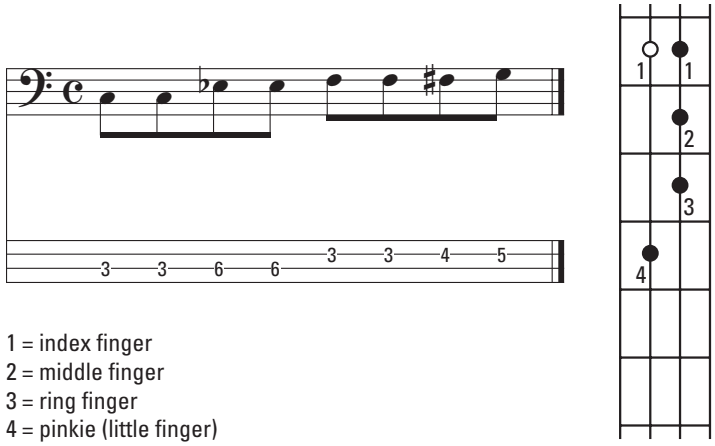


Figure 5-13: Using a chromatic tone in a minor bass line.

The chromatic tones in Figures 5-12 and 5-13 add a little tension to the bass lines — tension that's promptly released on the next note.

Chromatic tones outside the box

Most tunes, or songs, have a *shape,* or form. In other words, they have a certain way the melody moves up and down and repeats ideas, or phrases.

Tunes are arranged into measures and phrases; in the vast majority of cases, four measures equal a phrase (see Chapter 3 for details about how music is arranged). Just as horn players and singers pause at regular intervals to breathe, a tune also generally pauses between musical phrases. As the bassist, you're responsible for indicating the form of a tune to the other players. The notes you play tend to *set up* (lead to) the beginning of each new phrase, and you often can use chromatic tones to accomplish this.

You usually use chromatic tones that are inside the box to lead from one strong note to the next, but you also may use chromatic tones that fall outside the box (which means that you have to shift your left hand to reach them). Use them to lead to the chord tones (root, 3, 5, 7), which identify the tonality.

REMEMBER

As you experiment with chromatic tones, make sure that your overall tonality doesn't get obscured. You still want your sound to be recognizable as major or minor.

Figure 5-14 shows a bass line in a major tonality using a chromatic tone outside the box leading to a strong chord tone (in this case, the 3 of the chord).

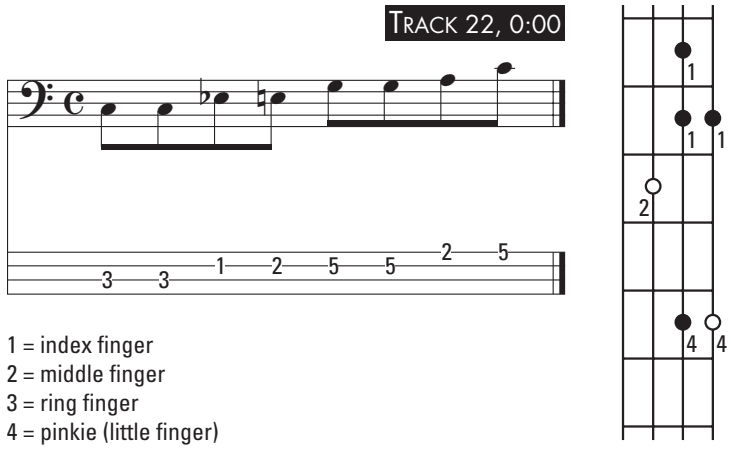


Figure 5-14: Using a chromatic tone outside the box in a major bass line.

Figure 5-15 shows a bass line in a minor tonality using a chromatic tone outside the box.

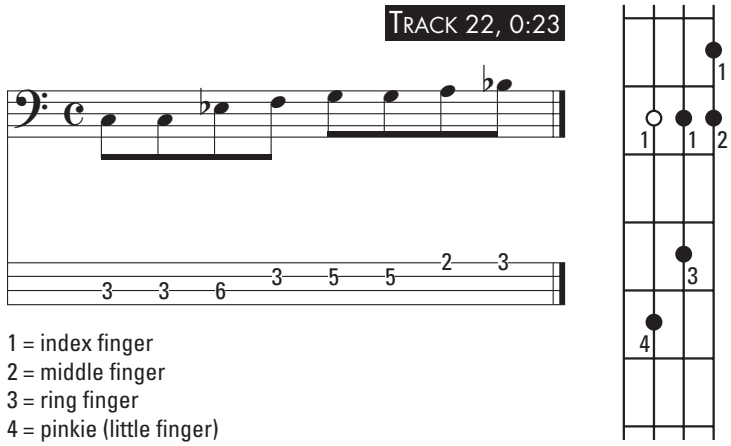


Figure 5-15: Using a chromatic tone outside the box in a minor bass line.

Listen to how the overall tonality in Figures 5-14 and 5-15 is preserved despite the addition of chromatic tones outside the box. The chromatic tones serve to make the groove more interesting. You reach outside the scale temporarily to give the music tension, but then you resolve it (lead to a chord tone). Check out Track 22 on the CD for the sound of this.

Bringing a Groove to Life with Dead Notes (Weird but True)

You may need to enhance a simple groove rhythmically, but none of the notes, chromatic or modal (from the mode), seem to be quite right. You may feel that the bass line needs something more to really bring the music to life. Enter the dead note.

A *dead note* is a note that's heard as a thud without any pitch. It gives the rhythm some attitude. Dead notes are favorites among many contemporary bassists. Playing a dead note is a cool way to boost a rhythmic groove without getting into trouble by adding notes that may harmonically clash with the melody.

Playing dead notes

To play a dead note, rest two or more fingers from your left hand on a string. (Be sure not to press the string to the fingerboard though.) Then strike that string with your right-hand index or middle finger. The result is a nonpitched thud. Figure 5-16 shows an example of a groove using dead notes. Notice how the second measure just keeps the rhythm going.

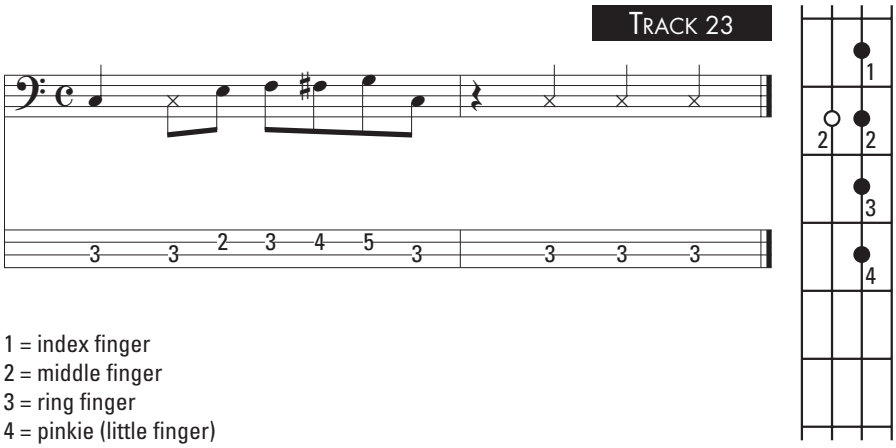


Figure 5-16: Using dead notes in a groove.

1 = index finger
2 = middle finger
3 = ring finger
4 = pinkie (little finger)

ON THE CD

As you listen to the groove from Figure 5-16 on Track 23, listen for the thud of the dead notes. Dead notes are completely devoid of pitch, but they sound as if they belong to the tonality.

Raking dead notes

Raking across the strings of your bass is a great, natural way to incorporate dead notes into your playing. *Raking* means striking a string with your right-hand index or middle finger and then striking the next lower (thicker) string with the same finger. You can rake across several strings with the same finger in one rake.

Here's how to play the dead note rake properly:

1. **Play the low note (the root) with your right-hand index finger.**
2. **Play the high note (the octave) with your right-hand middle finger.**
3. **Rake your right-hand middle finger across the string between the two notes (the root and the octave).**

   Mute the string you're crossing over by touching it lightly with at least two fingers of your left hand. (For more on muting, see Chapter 4.)
4. **Play the low note (the root) with your right-hand middle finger by raking across the low string.**

   You're now back at the beginning of the groove.
5. **Now play the high note (the octave) with your right-hand index finger.**
6. **Rake your right-hand index finger across the string between the two notes (the root and the octave).**

   Mute the string you're crossing.
7. **Play the low note (the root) with your right-hand index finger.**

   You're once again at the beginning of the groove.

In Figure 5-17 is a groove, which doubles as an exercise, to help you use the dead note and the rake in conjunction.

ON THE CD

On Track 24, listen to how smoothly the dead note from Figure 5-17 connects the sounded notes. The groove sounds much busier than it really is. It's sort of like talkin' loud and sayin' nothin'. Listen to see whether your groove matches the one on the CD.

TRACK 24

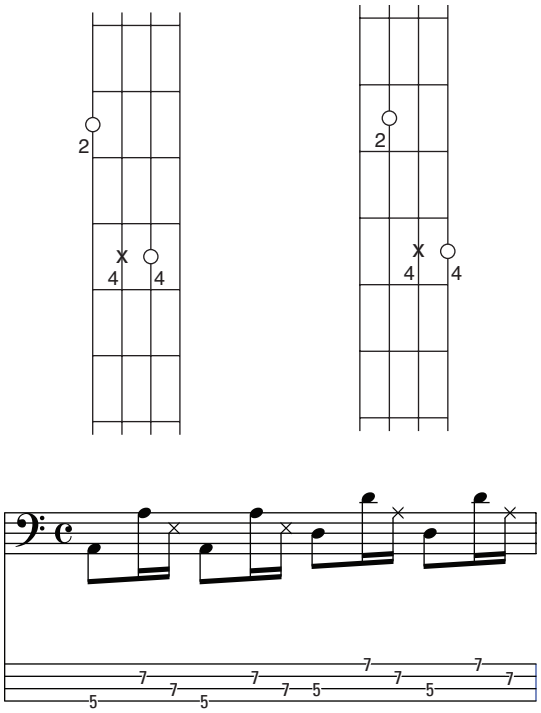


Figure 5-17: Dead note groove and exercise.

This grove is a useful and cool one for your own groove repertoire. (For more on grooves, see Chapter 6.) As you practice, notice that your hand works only about a third as fast as your groove sounds. That's because you're using right-hand string crossing and dead notes. (Proper string-crossing technique is discussed in Chapter 4.) Pretty powerful stuff, eh?

Sampling Accompaniments

If you've read through the previous sections of this chapter, you may be feeling anxious to put some of your newfound knowledge to good use. So strap on your bass and let me guide you through a few bass grooves.

REMEMBER

The word *groove* is used in two ways in the bass world: It can refer to a *bass line,* which is the overall accompaniment to a tune, or it can refer to a *phrase* (usually one, two, or four measures long) that a bassist repeats throughout a tune to establish the rhythm and the harmony.

The following grooves are based on a chord tonality that's dominant (root, 3, 5, ♭7) and thus related to the Mixolydian mode (root, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, ♭7). The tonal center (or root) is the same for all these grooves, so you can compare one groove with the next. In each of the following examples, the basic groove uses the same chord.

When you embellish a groove with other chord and scale tones, chromatic tones, and dead notes, it develops into a much more interesting and intricate bass line.

Figure 5-18 shows a groove based solely on a chord — a triad (root, 3, 5). This groove isn't very interesting, but it does the job of outlining the harmony with some rhythm.

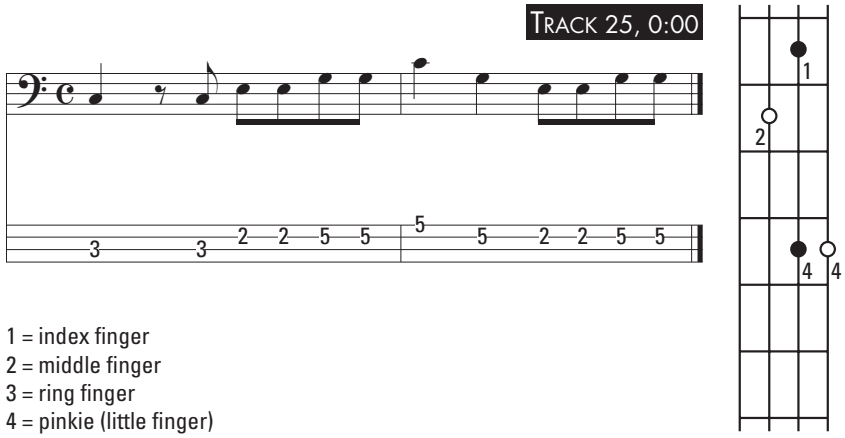


Figure 5-18: Bass groove using the chord.

1 = index finger
2 = middle finger
3 = ring finger
4 = pinkie (little finger)

Figure 5-19 shows the groove with the 7 added to the triad. The ♭7 defines the groove as a definite dominant chord (1, 3, 5, ♭7).

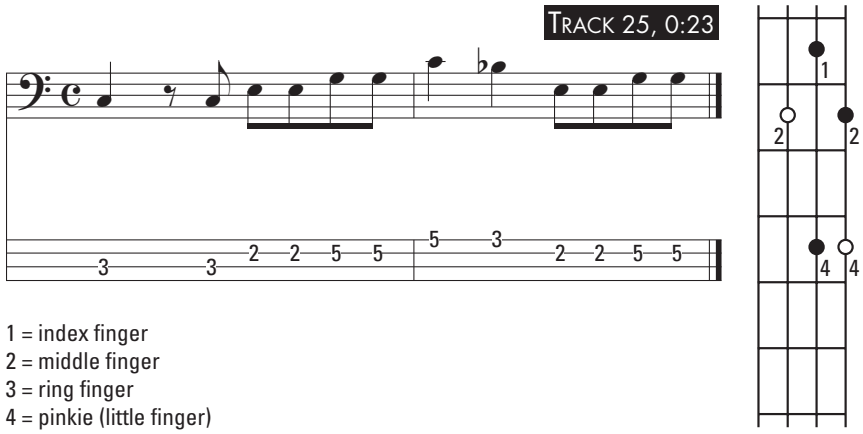


Figure 5-19: Bass groove using the 7th chord.

1 = index finger
2 = middle finger
3 = ring finger
4 = pinkie (little finger)

Figure 5-20 shows the groove with the mode added in its entirety (root, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, ♭7). The mode fills out the harmonic content of the groove. You're now solidly entrenched in the Mixolydian mode, and you have a solid box. Notice that in a box your left hand doesn't have to shift.

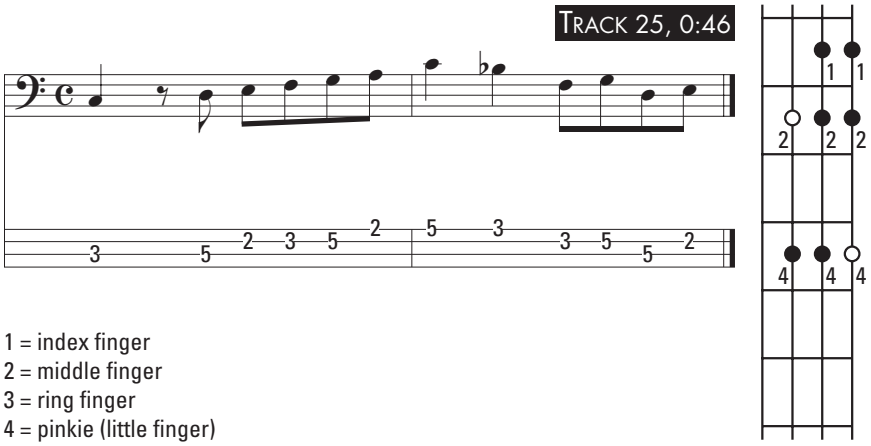


Figure 5-20: Bass groove using the Mixolydian mode.

1 = index finger
2 = middle finger
3 = ring finger
4 = pinkie (little finger)

Figure 5-21 shows the groove with some chromatic tones added both inside and outside the box. This groove is definitely developing some flavor and attitude now. At the same time, the groove is getting a bit more difficult to play. Your left hand has to shift to play a chromatic tone outside the box.

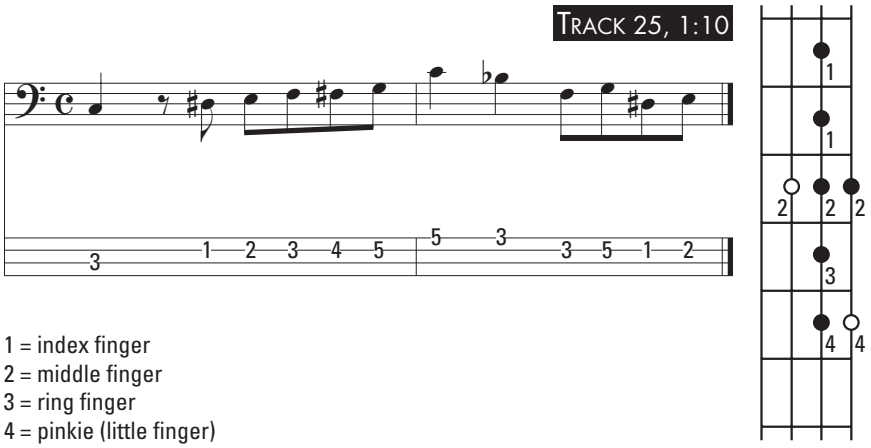


Figure 5-21: Bass groove using chromatic tones.

1 = index finger
2 = middle finger
3 = ring finger
4 = pinkie (little finger)

Figure 5-22 shows the groove with dead notes added as a finishing touch. You get to play some dead notes to fill the space and solidify the rhythm. Compare this groove with the previous grooves, and retrace the steps of adding each device.

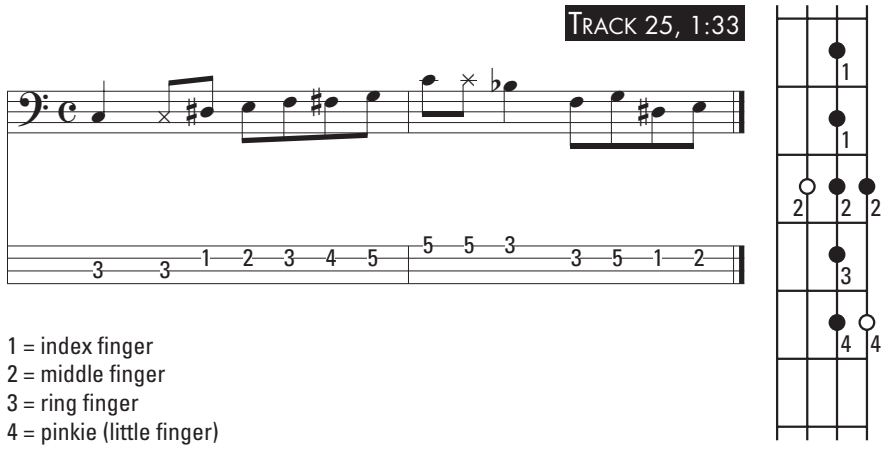


Figure 5-22: Bass groove using dead notes.

You don't want to use all these devices in every groove, but you do want to have them close at hand so you can beef up a groove whenever you feel the urge to do so.

Check out Track 25 to hear all the grooves in Figures 5-18 through 5-22. Listen to how each groove gets a little bit more complex as more devices are added yet essentially retains its basic characteristic in terms of tonality and rhythm.

Using your accompaniments in a tune

You can see how the grooves earlier in this section get more and more complex as you add scale tones, chromatic tones, and even dead notes to the basic chord tones. These souped-up grooves can be useful when you're jamming on a "one-chord wonder" with your band. If you're playing the same chord for a while and you feel like taking the groove to another level, you can use the devices I show you earlier to give the music some interesting variety while playing the same one-chord jam, thus keeping it interesting for the listeners as well as for the players.

Keep in mind that a one-chord jam session is a pretty common scenario when you're playing with other musicians. But whatever you do, don't underestimate the power of the single-chord groove — just listen to how well James Brown songs incorporate it.

The deal with Dorian

In traditional music, the most common minor scale (or mode) is the Aeolian mode, also known as the *natural minor.* With the advent of funk and groove contemporary music, the Aeolian mode has been gradually replaced with the edgier sounding Dorian mode. So now when a groove is called for and the harmony is minor, the mode of choice is Dorian rather than Aeolian.

ON THE CD

On Track 26, you can hear a song based on a single chord, C7 in this case. Find a C on your fingerboard (the 3rd fret on the A string would be a great choice), and then get your hands comfortable with the scale for C7, or C Mixolydian. (You can read more about which scales go with which chords earlier in this chapter.) Unless you're jamming with a bunch of A-type personalities, you're not very likely to get sheet music for a one-chord jam. Usually you just hear "Let's jam in C" from the bandleader.

As you're playing along with Track 26, play any of the grooves you see in Figure 5-18 through Figure 5-22. You can either stick with the same groove for the entire song or you can try building the complexity of your groove by playing one of the grooves for a while (Figure 5-18, for example), then trying another (perhaps Figure 5-21), and so on.

On the CD you hear the bass play each groove for two or four bars and then move on to the next groove in succession (Figure 5-18, Figure 5-19, Figure 5-20, all the way to Figure 5-22). Listen to how the same chord takes on a whole new character with each new groove.

Keeping your groove gloriously ambiguous

What happens if your bandleader calls the "jam in C," but you're not entirely sure what *kind* of C is expected? (After all, you have an arsenal of chords and modes to choose from.) This is a great opportunity to get into *harmonic ambiguity.* Harmonic ambiguity means that you choose to play notes in your groove that don't define a chord. These ambiguous notes are shared by almost all modes, and you can use any of them no matter what tonality you play in, especially in a one-chord groove jam.

As a general rule, your one-chord groove is almost always based on either a dominant (Mixolydian mode) or a minor (Dorian mode) tonality. Out of seven different notes of the modes, these two tonalities share — ready for some

serious ambiguity? — six! Whew, who'd have thought? This is great! In order to play all kinds of different grooves and keep them ambiguous, all you have to do is avoid one note — the 3, both minor and major. (For a look at the 3, check out the intervals in Chapter 2.) Everything else matches just fine and funky.

Take a look at Figure 5-23 for a comparison of the Mixolydian and the Dorian modes. The 3 (which is also the third note) of each mode is marked with an "X" rather than with a dot so you remember not to play it.

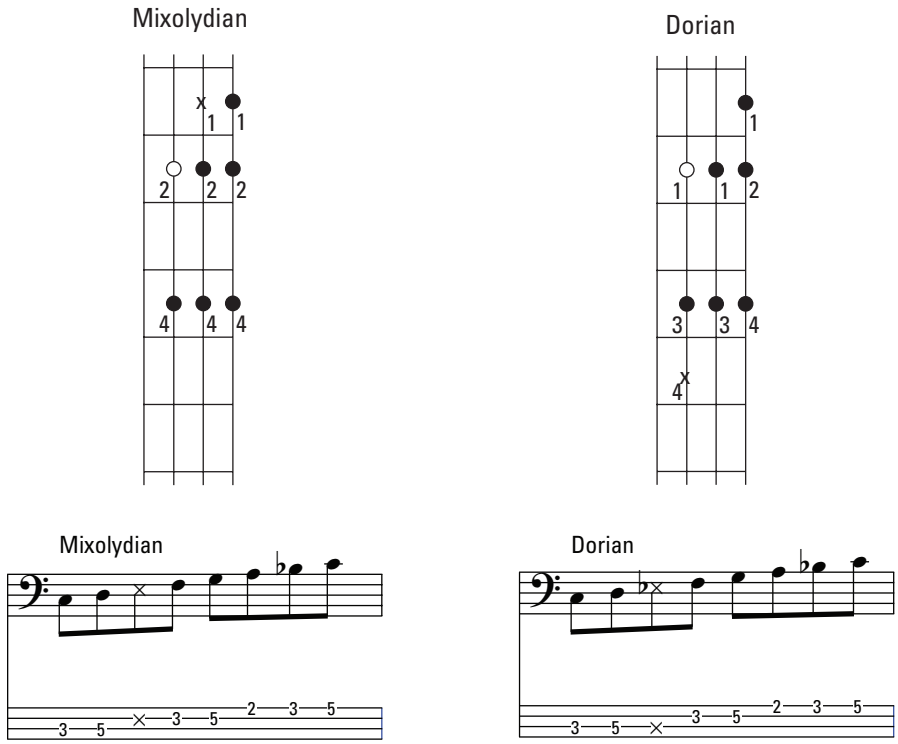


Figure 5-23: Mixolydian and Dorian modes side by side.

Figure 5-24 shows some possible *harmonically ambiguous* grooves. (What a mouthful . . . I would *love* to see the face of your guitar player the first time you use *that* in rehearsal.) Familiarize yourself with these grooves, and try coming up with some of your own using the same structure.

ON THE CD

Play your grooves with Track 27, in which the harmony shifts between dominant and minor over the same root, a C in this case. Listen to how the bass part fits really well over both harmonies. It's almost like a comfortable sweat suit — one size, er, harmony fits all.

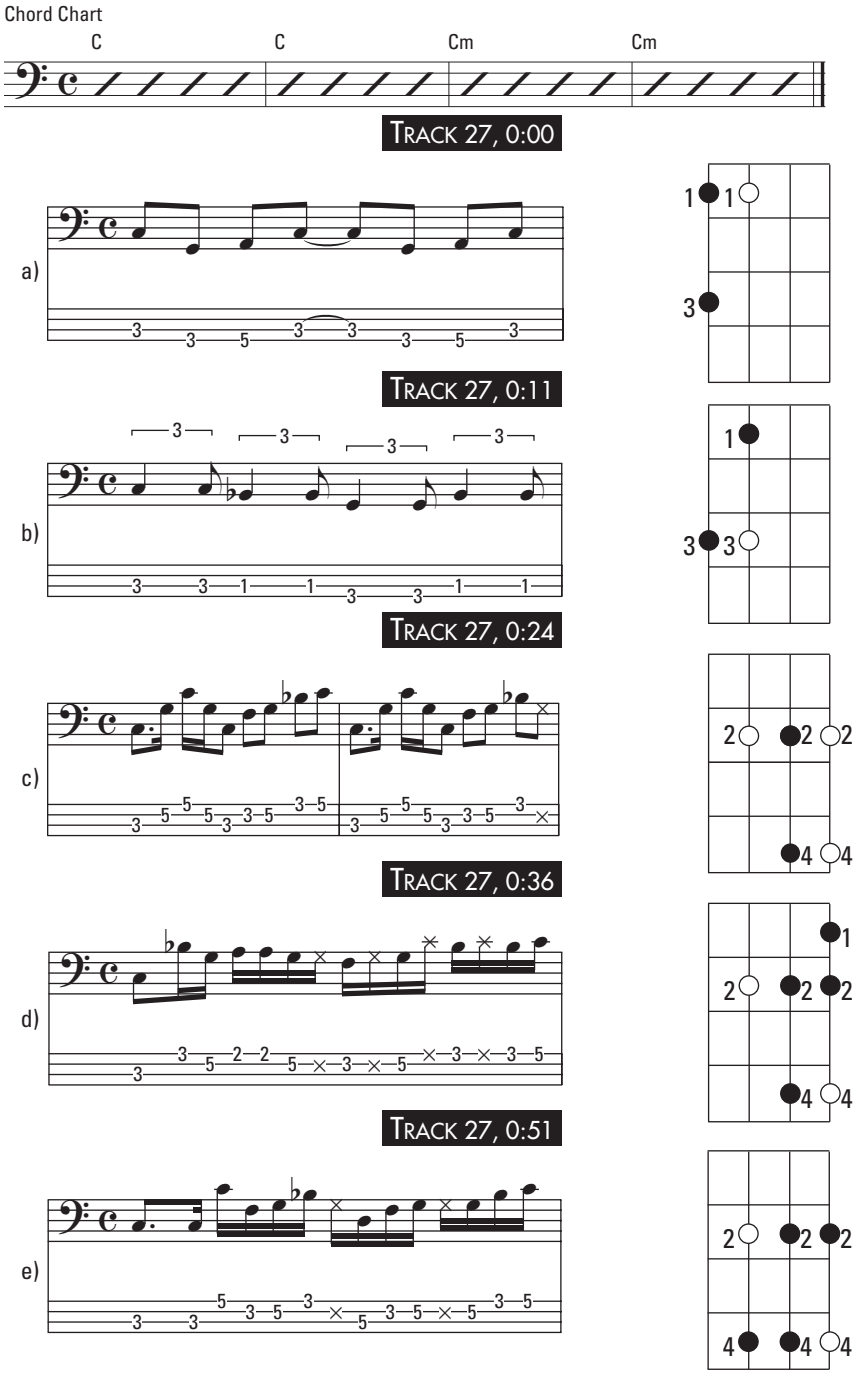
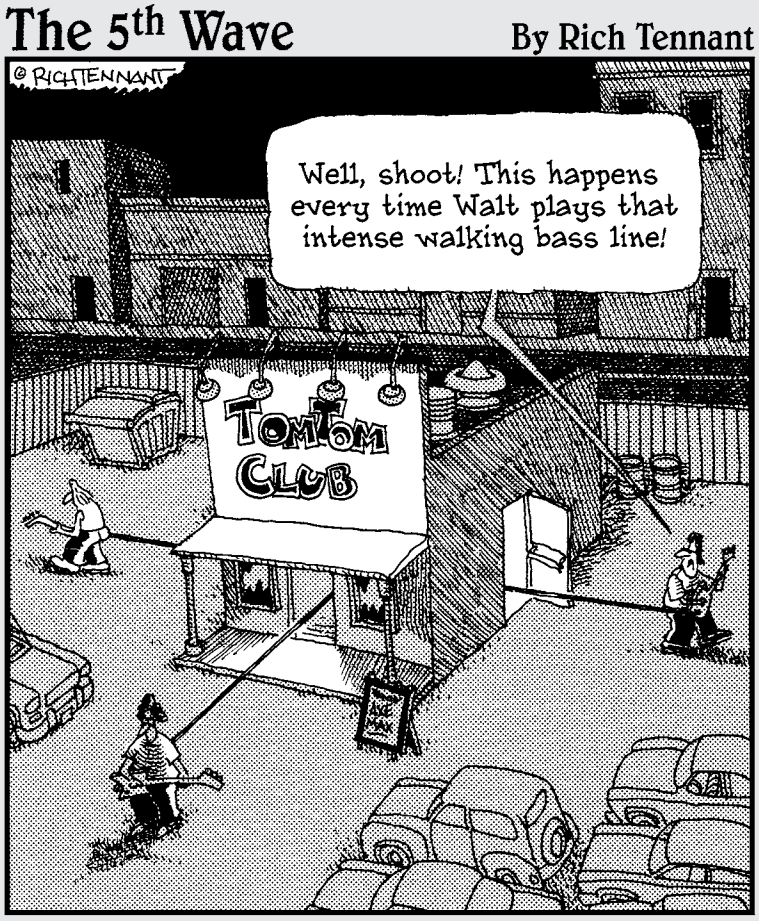


Figure 5-24: Harmonically ambiguous grooves.

Part III

Making the Moves, Creating the Grooves



In this part . . .

Welcome to the elite society of bassists. This part helps you unlock the deep mysteries of bass playing. Chapter 6 shows you how to create your own bass grooves, and Chapter 7 lets you shine with some hip solo licks and fills.

Chapter 6

Creating the Groove

In This Chapter

- Analyzing the elements of a groove
- Creating your very own groove
- Building grooves with a drummer
- Crafting grooves with another musician

What do rock, funk, blues, reggae, and all the other musical styles have in common? They each have their own distinctive groove. A *groove* is a short musical *phrase* (group of notes) that a bassist plays repeatedly throughout a tune. Grooves establish the rhythm and harmony through chords and scales for the band and the listener. Knowing how to create grooves in different styles is absolutely essential for a bass player — and it's a lot of fun.

This chapter introduces you to the wonderful world of grooves. To get the most out of the chapter, you need to have a handle on two vital concepts. Hmmm, if the groove establishes rhythm and harmony, could those two vital concepts be . . . rhythm . . . and harmony? Yes! Rhythm gets the audience snapping their fingers, and harmony sends them home singing. (You can find out more about rhythm in Chapter 3 and more about harmony in Chapter 5.) Are you ready? Then get into the groove!

Anatomy of a Groove: Putting Together the Necessary Elements

A good groove can make you tap your feet, bob your head, and snap your fingers. You can move the same groove from chord to chord in a tune without changing the basic phrase. Sounds wimpy, you say? Actually, grooves are anything but wimpy. One of my teachers (a long, long time ago) told me something I'll never forget: "With the right groove, a good bassist alone can move a whole roomful of people." A groove is constructed of several elements, and you can use the different elements to create your own earth-shaking grooves. Check out the guidelines in this section to get started.

Rattling the groove skeleton

The first two notes of any groove are what I refer to as the *groove skeleton.* A groove can contain other notes besides the groove skeleton, but these first two notes are the most important because they establish the root of the chord, the pulse or tempo for the tune, and the feel of the rhythm. The following list takes a closer look at each of these elements:

- **The root of the chord:** You usually play the root as the first note of your groove. The root of any chord (or scale) is the most important note in that chord — it's the note your ear gravitates toward (the most satisfying note). The second note, or the other half of the groove skeleton, is usually a chord tone (root, 3, 5, or 7) that further defines the chord. With these two notes, you give the listener a good idea of the harmony in a tune. You can find the chord tones for each *tonality* (sound) in Chapter 5.
- **The pulse (tempo) of the tune:** Music has a certain pulse. The *pulse* is the speed at which you count 1-2-3-4, or the speed at which you tap your feet in time with a tune. The pulse can be fast, slow, or something in between. The time that elapses between the first note and the second note of the groove skeleton establishes the pulse for the groove and for the song, and tells the listener how fast the music is.
- **The feel of the rhythm:** You can divide a beat only so many ways: into quarters, eighths, sixteenths, or triplets. No, I'm not referring to babies. *Triplets* divide a beat into three equal parts. (See Chapter 3 for more on rhythm.) When you choose the division of the beat for your groove skeleton, you signal the feel of the groove and song to the listener. The feel has nothing to do with tempo (see the previous bullet). Different feels can be applied to the same tempo. A *feel* can give the listener a sense of urgency or a sense of laziness in a tune, all without changing the overall tempo of the music. Figure 6-1 shows how the groove skeleton creates different feels.

When you listen to the grooves from Figure 6-1 on Track 28, tap your feet in tempo. (You can hear the count-off, which establishes the tempo, at the beginning of the track.) Notice how the tempo for all six of these grooves remains the same. Also notice that all six grooves use exactly the same notes. Even so, as you listen to these grooves, pay special attention to how very different they are from each other. Each one has its own unique characteristics, created simply by slight changes in the rhythm of the two notes in the groove skeleton. This variation shows the power of the groove skeleton: If you change the groove skeleton and leave everything else exactly as is, you still end up with a completely new groove. In this track, the groove skeleton is the only thing that changes from groove to groove.

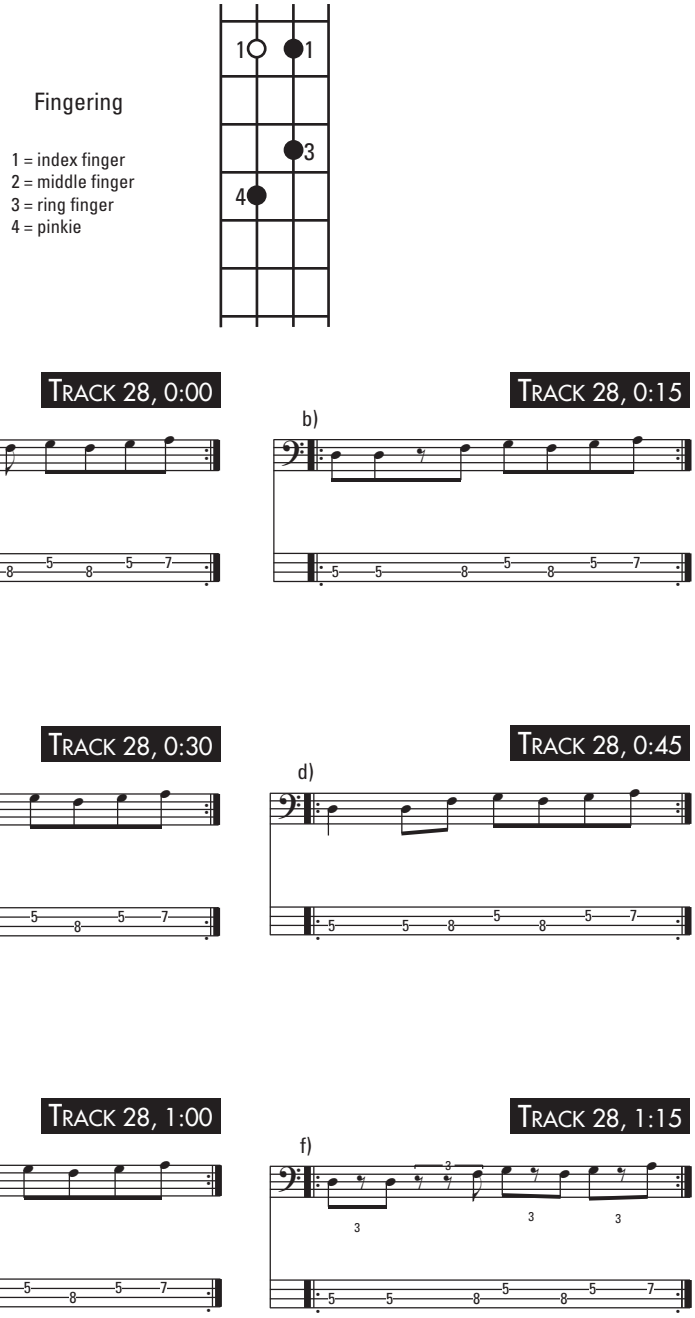


Figure 6-1: Six grooves with different groove skeletons.

Playing a song using only the groove skeleton

How important is the groove skeleton? It's so important that you can accompany an entire song on your bass using solely (or is it "soul-ly") the groove skeleton. Playing this way isn't just an arbitrary exercise, either. It's a perfectly legitimate and successful method of playing bass on a song.

Need proof? Just listen to the hit "Stand by Me," one of the top rock 'n' roll hits of all time. And plenty of modern dance hits operate on the same premise of using just the groove skeleton in the bass and either nothing or very little else.

Playing just the groove skeleton also is a great way to get to know the harmonic structure of a song — the movement of the roots of the chords — without having to worry about playing a complex groove on each one of those chords. You always can add notes to the groove later as you play a song and grow more familiar with it.

ON THE CD

On Track 29 you can hear a song being accompanied by just the groove skeleton in the bass. Figure 6-2 shows the harmony of the song. To play it with the CD all you need to do is find the roots of the chords on your bass neck and play the groove skeleton with each root. Are you comfortable playing along with the bass on the recording? If so, pan it out and be the only bass.

WARNING!

Player beware! Space is the most difficult thing to play, and if you're only playing the two notes of the groove skeleton, you have plenty of space to contend with for the remainder of the measure. (For more on measures, also called bars, see Chapter 3.)

Choosing the right notes for a groove

Playing grooves is an elusive art form. I remember when I came out of school and could only copy other people's grooves. I didn't have a clue about how to create my own. Finally, after years of research and analysis, I discovered what makes a groove . . . *groove.* Yes, there's a method to the madness, and a science to the art.

TRACK 29

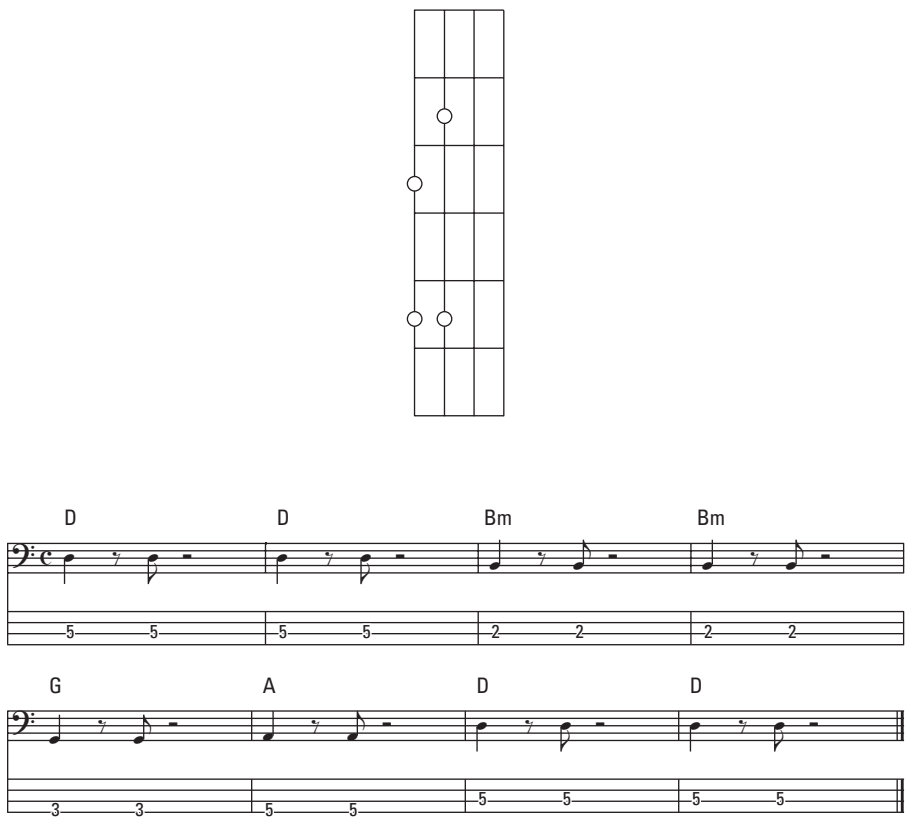


Figure 6-2: Song played using only the groove skeleton.

A few basic guidelines

The following list gives you a few basic guidelines to remember when you're creating any groove:

- **Choose notes from the appropriate scale for the chord.** Almost every tune has its own unique set of chords that accompanies the music. Your choice of notes needs to correspond to each particular chord in the tune. If your groove doesn't match harmonically with what's going on in the music, it's no longer music; it's noise. You can check out Chapter 5 to see which scales go with which chords.

- **Settle on a finger position.** Try to choose notes for your groove that fit into a *box* (a pattern of notes on your fingerboard that requires no, or very little, shifting with your left hand; see Chapter 5 for more info). The less you shift your left hand, the easier it is to play the groove. You may think that sliding all over your fingerboard looks cool, but the best bassists tend to hold one position for as long as possible. Your hand gets used to a certain sequence, and you don't even have to think about playing the groove (after you've practiced it enough, of course).
- **Make your groove mobile.** Some tunes consist of only one underlying tonality throughout, so you don't have to move your groove around (just listen to some James Brown tunes). In most tunes, however, the chords change as the tune proceeds, which means you have to move your groove to match the chord changes within the tune. With this type of tune, you need to make sure you pick a group of notes that's simple to execute when you move from chord to chord.

Ranking the best and leaving the rest

The list in the preceding section gives you a general idea of what to consider when creating a groove. Now I want to give you some guidance in choosing the best notes to incorporate into your groove. The three most commonly used scales in a groove are the major, minor, and dominant scales. Chords are made up of the root, the 3, the 5, and sometimes the 7 of the scale they're related to. Check out Figure 6-3 for the structure of the major (Ionian), minor (Dorian), and dominant (Mixolydian) scales. Take a look at Chapter 5 for more on these scales.

REMEMBER

Not all notes are created equal. Certain notes in a scale sound better in a groove than others. The following notes are the prime choices for your grooves (listed in order of importance):

- **Root:** There's no question about it; you have to know the root of each chord in the tune. The root identifies the sound of the chord for your band and for the listener. For example, a D-minor chord has D as the root; an E-dominant chord has E as the root. The root is the most important note in a chord. Your band counts on you to define the sound of each chord for them. That's why bassists play the root as the first note every time the chord changes; so be sure to play that root with authority.
- **5th:** The 5 reinforces the root, and it's fairly neutral (it fits over any major, minor, or dominant chord). The interval (distance) between the root and the 5 is the same for major, minor, and dominant chords. If you have a lot of chord changes between major, minor, and dominant in a tune, the root and 5 combination is the perfect choice for your groove notes.

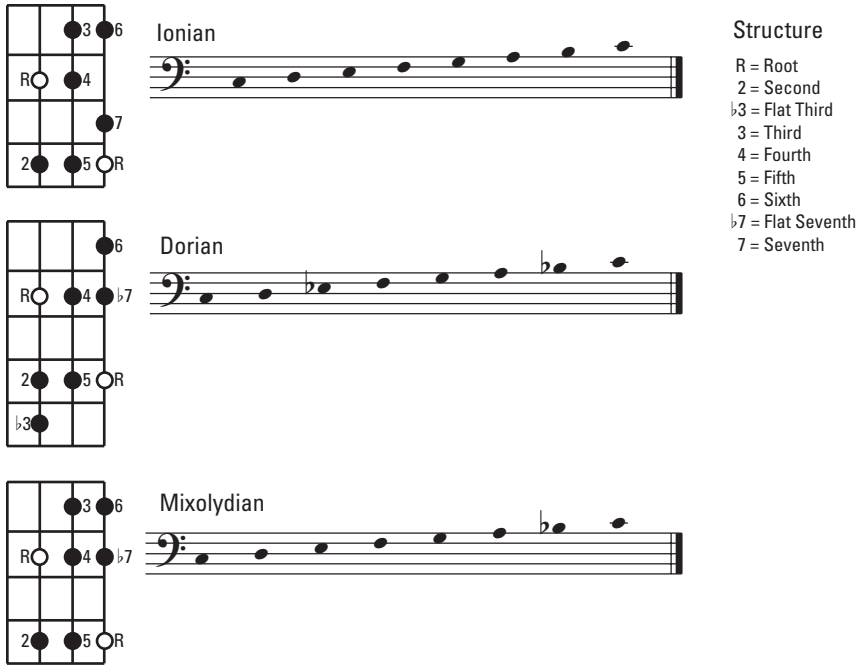


Figure 6-3: Common scales used for grooves (Ionian, Dorian, and Mixolydian).

- **3rd:** The 3 identifies the chord as either major or minor. Choosing the 3 also forces you to settle on a hand position. If the chord is major and therefore requires a major 3, start your groove with your middle finger on the root in order to reach all the notes in the scale for that chord without shifting. If the chord is minor and therefore requires a minor 3 (♭3), start the groove with your index finger on the root. (Check out the fingering of the scales in Chapter 5 for more info.)
- **7th:** The 7 is another excellent choice for a groove, especially if the chord is minor or dominant. Minor and dominant chords both have a ♭7.
- **4th:** The 4 is a great note to play as a *passing note* (an unstressed note that you play on your way to the next important note). A passing note adds a little spice to the groove (it gives the groove an interesting sound). Just be careful not to emphasize a passing note, because doing so tends to obscure the chord. (However, keep in mind that an emphasized passing note makes a good choice if you intend to play an ambiguous groove, as I explain in Chapter 5).
- **6th:** The 6 is a good choice to play as a *neutral note.* In other words, no matter what your chord is, the 6 will generally fit. As with the 4, you don't want to emphasize it too strongly, though. Using the 6 as a passing

note would be ideal. Passing notes are used to smooth the passage from one strong note to the next.

- **2nd:** The 2 isn't exactly a terrific choice to include in your groove. It's too close to the root (only two frets away), so it clashes, and it doesn't give your bass line enough variety. However, the 2 can work as a passing note.

Creating Your Own Groove

With a little help from your friend (that's me!), you can create your own groove. The process that goes on in your head each time you create a groove for a tune is the same, no matter what kind of chord you're playing (major, minor, or dominant).

If you haven't already, you may want to take a look at the section "Choosing the right notes for a groove," earlier in this chapter, to familiarize yourself with the important decisions you need to make *before* creating a groove.

Covering the "basses": Creating dominant, minor, and major grooves

The process in preparing to play any groove is the same, but you need to make a few adjustments to accommodate your groove to each kind of chord: dominant, minor, and major (see Chapter 5). Read on for some help in creating some unforgettable grooves.

The dominant groove

Imagine that you're getting together with a bunch of other musicians to play some music. The guy in charge says, "Let's jam in D7." (He's talking about playing in D dominant.) Don't panic. The following list gives you some guidelines for determining what notes to play during a D7 jam. Figure 6-4 shows you the process.

1. **Determine the root of the chord.**

   In this case, the chord is D7, so the root of the chord is D (see Figure 6-4a).

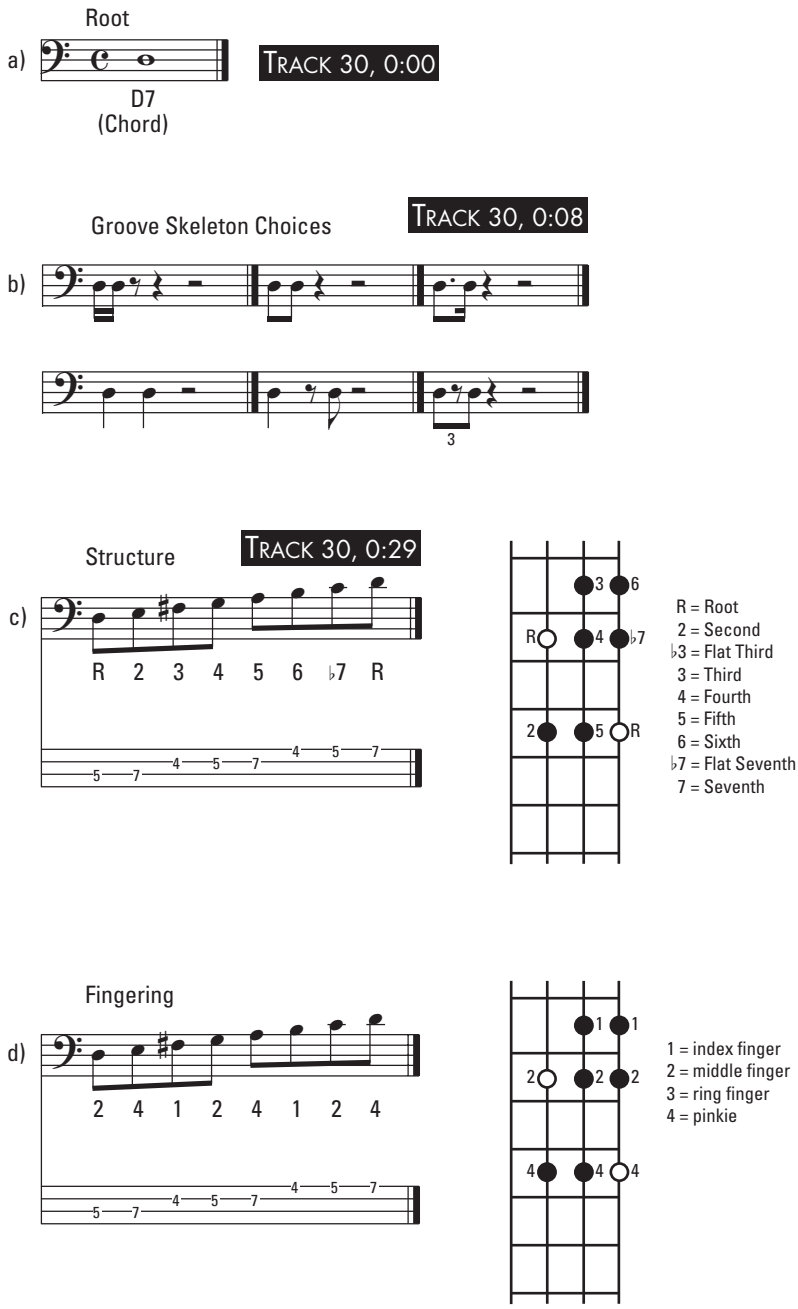


Figure 6-4: Creating a groove for D7 (D dominant).

2. **Decide what kind of groove skeleton you want to play.**

   Figure 6-4b shows your basic choices. The example uses two eighth notes, but feel free to experiment with the other possibilities. In fact, let your ear decide which rhythm sounds best for the given situation. (For more on the groove skeleton, see "Rattling the groove skeleton," earlier in this chapter.)

3. **Choose the appropriate scale for the chord.**

   For the D7 chord in this example, the proper scale is D Mixolydian (see Figure 6-4c). Chapter 5 can help you find out which scale goes with which chord.

   To play the D-Mixolydian scale, start the scale on the 5th fret of the A string and end on the 7th fret of the G string. Choose the notes for your groove from this scale. You can pick the choice notes (see "Ranking the best and leaving the rest," earlier in this chapter, for details) from the intervals marked in Figure 6-4c. My choice is the root, 5, and ♭7 for the simple groove, and the root, 3, 4, 5, and ♭7 for the complex groove (see Figure 6-5).

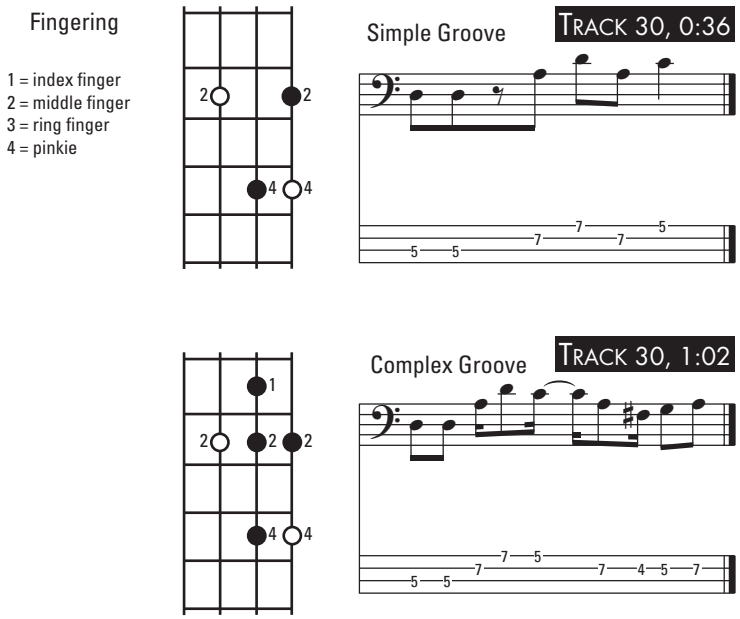


Figure 6-5: A simple groove and a complex groove for D7.

4. **Position your left hand.**

   You want to play the groove with the least amount of effort, so you need to avoid any unnecessary shifting with your left hand. Start the D-Mixolydian scale with the middle finger of your left hand on the root D (5th fret of the A string). You can reach all the notes of the scale from this position without moving your left hand. Refer to Figure 6-4d for the fingering for this scale.

5. **Determine how mobile your groove needs to be.**

   If the tune has different chords (the roots change), your groove has to be *mobile,* or moveable from chord to chord. In this case, you need to make your groove simple. Choose only a few notes and make them easy to play.

   If you stay on one chord for a while (which is the likely scenario if someone wants to jam in D7), you can make your groove a bit more complex to keep it interesting. Refer to Figure 6-5 for both a simple and a complex version of the same groove.

6. **Enjoy playing your groove.**

   You read correctly. Have fun! Whatever groove you come up with, make it meaningful. Jamming isn't work — it's play!

ON THE CD

On Track 30 you can listen to the steps necessary when creating a dominant groove. First you hear the D7 chord played on the keyboard, with the bass playing just the root. Then you hear the bass playing different groove skeletons on the root of the chord. Next is the sound of the Mixolydian mode, the correct scale for D7. Finally you hear a simple groove in D7, followed by a complex groove in D7. As you listen, follow the process in Figures 6-4 and 6-5.

The minor groove

You're playing with the band, jamming on a dominant groove . . . but wait . . . what if the guy in charge yells, very enthusiastically, "Let's jam in D *minor!*"? Uh, oh . . . a minor adjustment is in order. Relax. Figure 6-6 shows you the process.

1. **Determine the root of the chord.**

   In this case, the chord is D minor (Dm or Dm7), so the root of the chord is D (see Figure 6-6a).

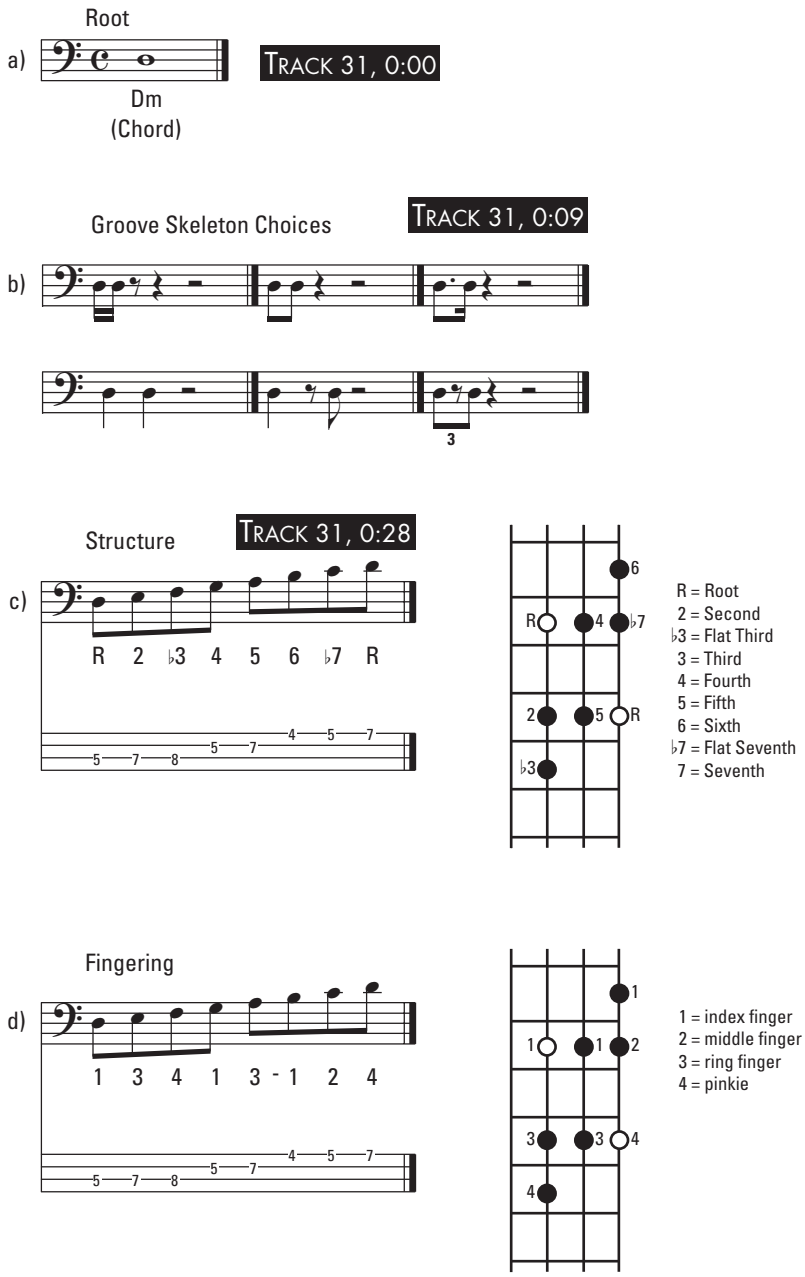


Figure 6-6: Creating a groove for D minor.

2. **Decide what kind of groove skeleton you want to play.**

   I show you the basic choices in Figure 6-6b. My choice is the dotted eighth note and the sixteenth note as the groove skeleton, but you can experiment with the other possibilities.

3. **Choose the appropriate scale for the chord.**

   For the D-minor chord in this example, the proper scale is D Dorian (see Figure 6-6c). For more info about the D-Dorian scale, see Chapter 5.

   To play the D-Dorian scale, start the scale on the 5th fret of the A string and end it on the 7th fret of the G string. Choose the notes for your groove from this scale. You can pick the choice notes from the intervals marked in Figure 6-6c. My choice is the root, 5, and ♭7 for the simple groove, and the root, ♭3, 4, 5, and ♭7 for the complex groove (see Figure 6-7).

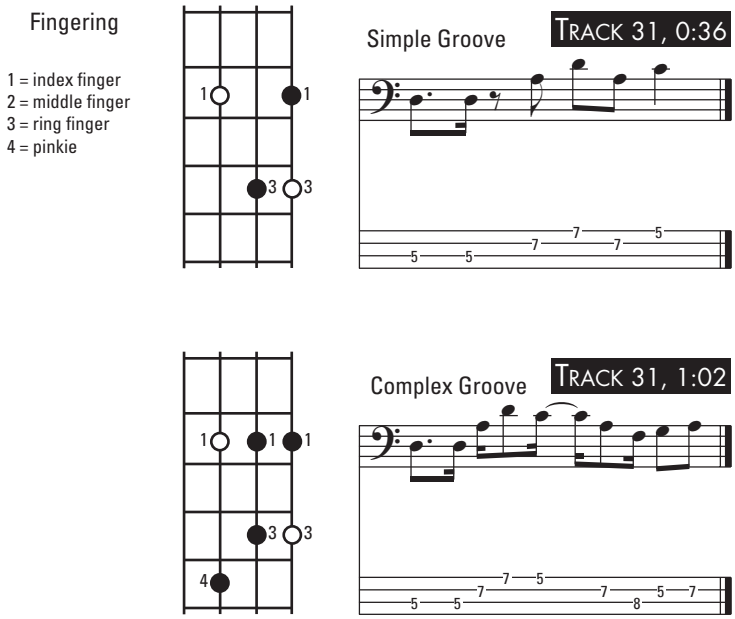


Figure 6-7: A simple and a complex groove for D minor.

4. **Position your left hand.**

   You want to avoid any unnecessary shifts with your left hand. The D-Dorian scale requires one (itty, bitty) shift, however. So it's best to begin the D-Dorian scale with the index finger of your left hand on the root D (5th fret of the A string). You can reach all the notes of the scale

from this position until you get to the G string. At that point, you need to shift your hand toward the nut by one fret to reach the remaining three notes. Check out Figure 6-6d on how to finger this scale.

5. **Determine how mobile your groove needs to be.**

   Your groove has to be mobile if the tune has different chords. In this case, be sure to create a groove that's simple. Choose only a few notes that are easy to play. Even though the D-Dorian scale requires you to shift your hand, you don't have to play every single note in that scale. You may decide to choose only the notes of the scale that you can reach from one position (without shifting).

   If you stay on one chord for a while (which is the likely scenario if someone wants to jam in D minor), you can make your groove a bit more complex to keep it interesting. Figure 6-7 shows both a simple and a complex version of the same groove. Notice that neither of the two grooves requires any shifting with the left hand.

ON THE CD

On Track 31, check out the steps necessary when creating a minor groove. First, the D minor chord is played on the keyboard with the bass adding the root. Next, different groove skeletons are played on the root of the chord. Then you can hear the sound of the Dorian mode, the correct scale for D minor. Finally, you can listen to a simple groove in D minor, followed by a complex groove in D minor. Follow this process along in Figures 6-6 and 6-7.

The major groove

Say you're jamming away with the band on a minor groove, when all of a sudden the guy in charge yells (with uninhibited enthusiasm), "Let's jam in D major!" Hmmm, does he really mean *major?* Here's the way to respond to that enthusiasm. Figure 6-8 shows you the process.

1. **Determine the root of the chord.**

   In this case, the chord is D major (D Maj or D Maj7), so the root of the chord is D (see Figure 6-8a).

2. **Decide what kind of groove skeleton you want to play.**

   Figure 6-8b shows the basic choices. I'm choosing the two sixteenth notes as the groove skeleton, but you can experiment with the other possibilities as well.

3. **Choose the appropriate scale for the chord.**

   For the D-major chord in this example, the proper scale is D Ionian (see Figure 6-8c). You can find more info on the Ionian scale in Chapter 5.

   To play the D-Ionian scale, you start the scale on the 5th fret of the A string and end it on the 7th fret of the G string. Choose the notes for your groove from this scale. You can pick the choice notes from the intervals marked in Figure 6-8c. My choice is the root, 5, and 6 for the simple groove, and the root, 3, 4, 5, and 6 for the complex groove (see Figure 6-9).

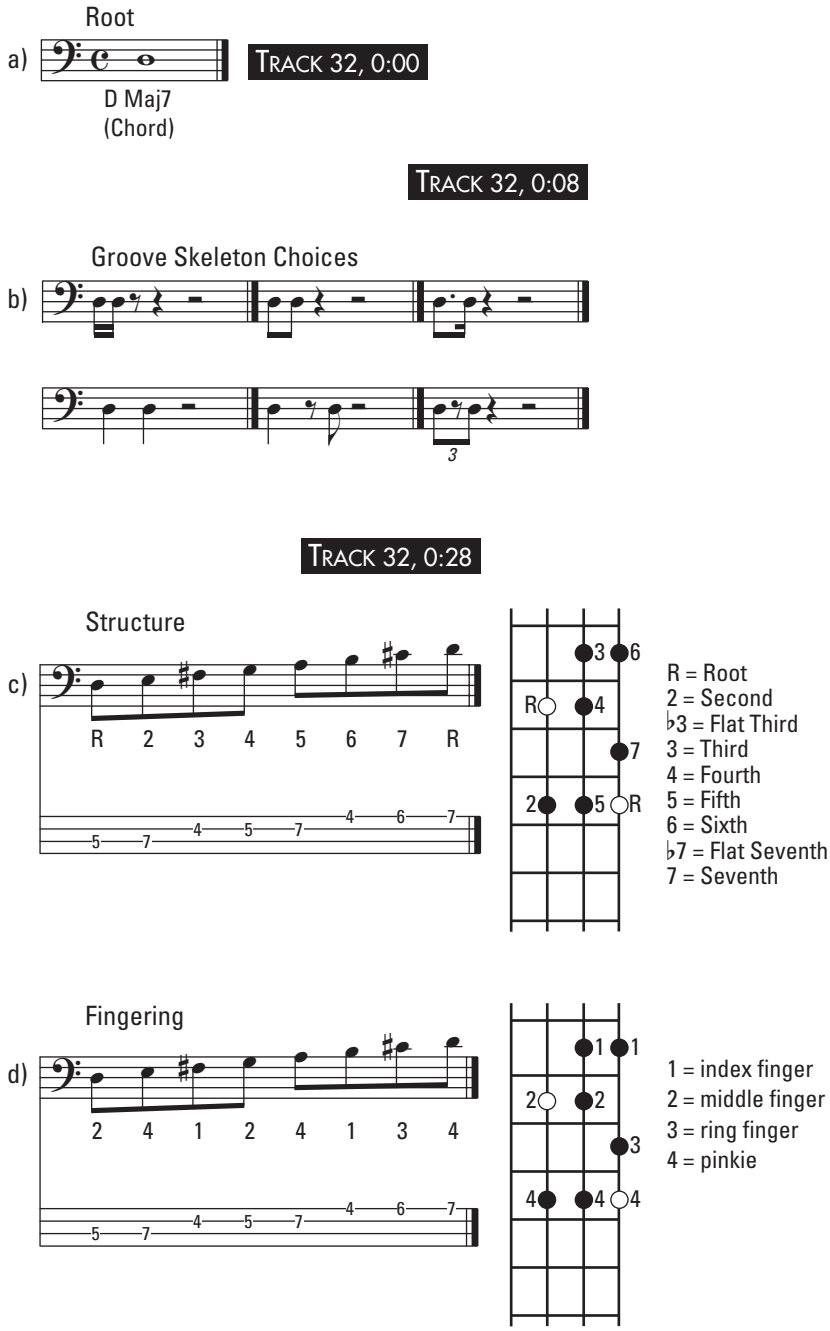


Figure 6-8: Creating a groove for D major.

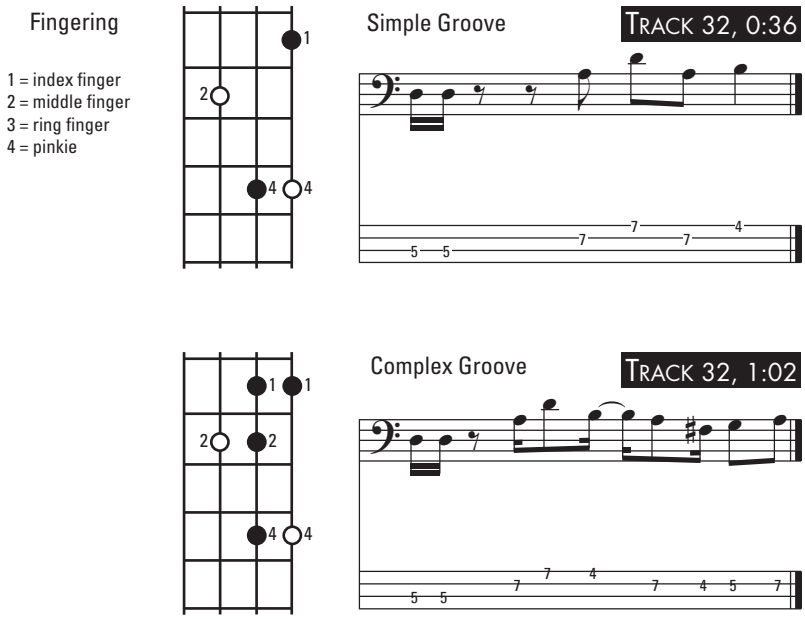


Figure 6-9: A simple and a complex groove for D major.

4. **Position your left hand.**

   You want to avoid any unnecessary shifting with your left hand. So start the D-Ionian scale with the middle finger of your left hand on the D (5th fret of the A string), which is the root. You can reach all the notes of the scale from this position without moving your left hand. You can refer to Figure 6-8d for the fingering for this scale.

5. **Decide how mobile your groove needs to be.**

   If the tune has different chords — if the roots change — your groove has to be mobile (moveable from chord to chord), so the groove you create needs to be a simple one. Use only a few notes and make them easy to play.

   If you stay on one chord for a while, you can make your groove a bit more complex to keep it interesting. You can see both a simple and a complex version of the same groove in Figure 6-9.

TIP

In the case of the major chord, you have to consider one more thing when choosing the notes for the groove: The 7 of the Ionian scale doesn't sound all that great in a groove format, so avoid it if you can. Choose the 6 instead; the 6 is usually a great choice, but let your own ears decide what's right.

ON THE CD

On Track 32, check out the steps necessary when creating a major groove. First, the D major chord is played on the keyboard with the bass adding the root. Next, different groove skeletons are played on the root of the chord. Then you hear the sound of the Ionian mode, the correct scale for D major. Finally, listen to a simple groove in D major, followed by a complex groove in D major. Notice how the 6 of the mode is played in the groove rather than the 7. Follow this process in Figures 6-8 and 6-9.

Movin' and groovin' from chord to chord

Imagine that you're jamming on D7, D minor, and D major (all three are covered in the previous section), and the grooves are just cascading off your fingers. The whole room is positively rocking. In fact, things are going so well, that the leader of this musical extravaganza decides to surprise you by handing out the *chord charts* (pages of musical notation) of a tune he or she wrote the previous week.

The chords of the tune move all over the place and change between major, minor, and dominant more frequently than your lead-footed cousin Jimmy changes lanes on a four-lane highway. Should you tremble? Absolutely not. Just take a look at the chord chart in Figure 6-10 and find out where the roots are located. Using the concepts from the previous sections, you can come up with a simple groove that you can move easily from chord to chord.

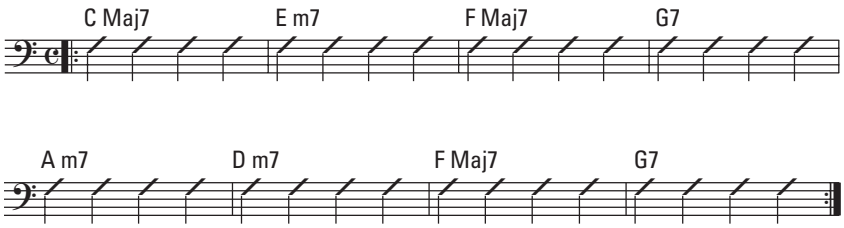


Figure 6-10: A chord chart.

Using constant structure

Using constant structure is one way to move a groove easily between chords with different tonalities (major, minor, and dominant). *Constant structure* refers to a group of notes in a groove that can be moved from chord to chord regardless of whether the chords are major, minor, or dominant tonalities (for more on this concept, check out Chapter 5). The root and 5 of a scale are one of the most common constant structures for grooves and can be easily

moved between chords. Grooves using the root and 5 are simple but powerful. In fact, most songs incorporate root-5 grooves. The following steps, along with Figure 6-11, show you how to create a mobile groove:

1. **Create a groove.**

   To create a groove, take a look at the section earlier in this chapter "Covering the 'basses': Creating dominant, minor, and major grooves." Keep the groove simple, because you need to move it to several different chords. My choice is a groove that doesn't require you to shift your hand to reach all the notes (see Figure 6-11a).

   To play this groove, you need access to two strings above your root, so choose the root on either the E string or the A string. You won't have enough strings to play this groove if you start on either the D or G string.

2. **Find the roots of the chords.**

   Look at your chord chart (simulated in Figure 6-10) and find the roots of the chords on the fingerboard of your bass. Remember that all your roots have to be on the E or the A string to play this groove. Figure 6-11b shows you where the roots for the chords on the chord chart are located on your bass.

3. **Practice moving the groove smoothly from one chord to the next.**

   You have to make these moves without any hesitation. Figure 6-11c shows the movement of the chords on your fingerboard.

ON THE CD

The groove you hear on Track 33 can be moved anywhere without your having to change the fingering. You do, of course, have to shift your hand into position for each new chord, however. Follow the chart in Figure 6-11.

Using chord tones

Another way to move a groove between chords with different tonalities is to use chord tones. *Chord tones* are the notes in any chord (root, 3, 5, and 7) that identify the chord type.

REMEMBER

When you play a song that includes several tonalities, such as major, minor, and dominant, you need to make slight adjustments in your groove to play the different chord tones. Your fingering changes as you move from one kind of chord to another. Keep the groove simple, because you have your hands full (pun intended) just changing the groove from chord to chord.

The following steps and Figure 6-12 help you create a mobile groove that uses chord tones:

1. **Create a groove.**

   Make your groove simple enough to handle. My choice is a groove that includes the root, 3, and 5 of a chord. You can see the different patterns for major, minor, and dominant in Figure 6-12a. (For the sake of comparison, all the patterns start on D.) Practice the groove, starting on the same note to get comfortable with it. This groove covers two strings: the string you play the root on, and the one above it. You can start the groove on the E, A, or D string.

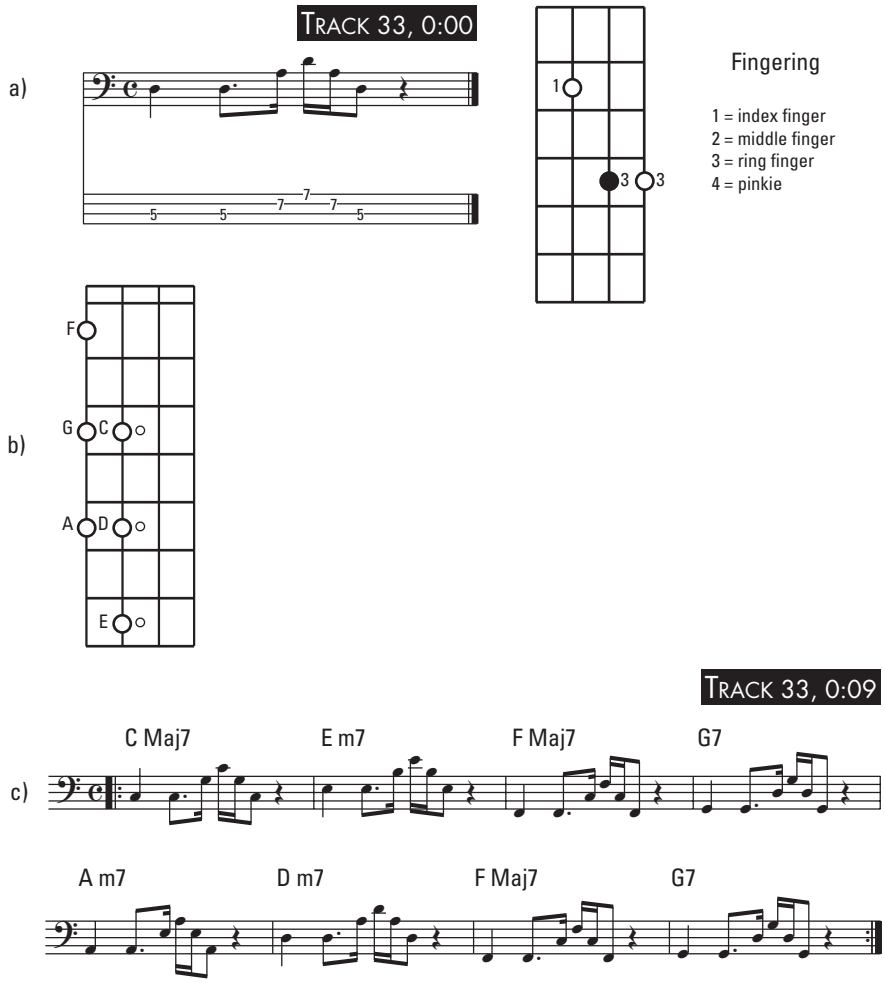


Figure 6-11: Mobile groove using constant structure.

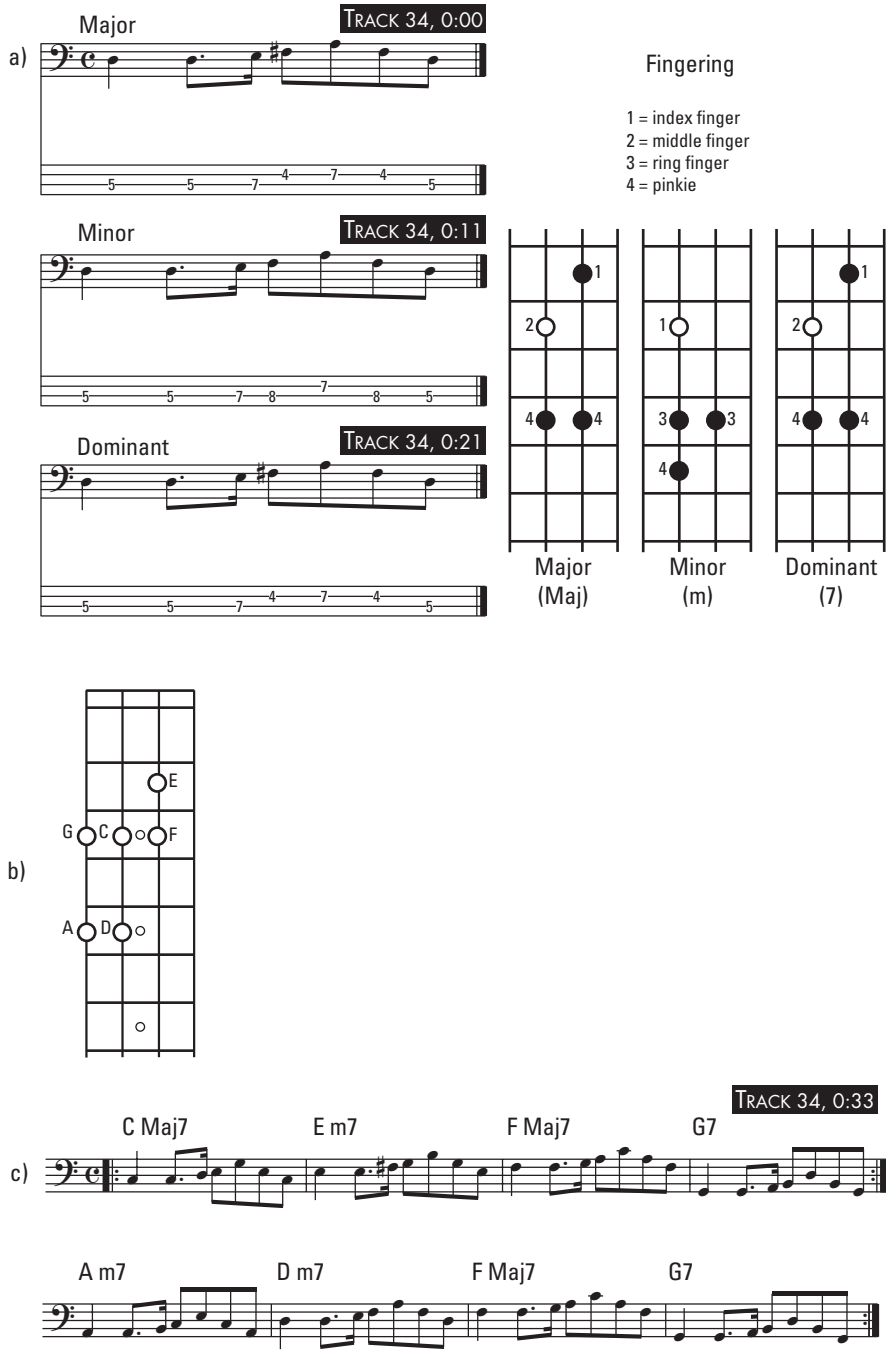


Figure 6-12: Mobile groove using chord tones.

2. **Find the roots of the chords.**

   Using the chord chart (refer to Figure 6-10), find the roots of the chords on your fingerboard. Your roots can start on the E, A, or D string. Figure 6-12b shows you the locations of the roots for this particular chord chart.

3. **Practice moving the groove smoothly from one chord to the next.**

   You have to change your fingering from chord to chord. Perform these fingering changes without hesitation. Figure 6-12c shows the configuration of the groove for different chords.

ON THE CD

The groove on Track 34 changes shape with each new chord tonality, which means you need to adjust your fingering with each chord (in addition to shifting your hand into position). Keep an eye on Figure 6-12 to get a handle on this concept.

Finding the perfect fit: The designer groove

Every now and then you hear a bass groove that simply knocks your socks off — a groove that seems to fit the song like a glove. I call these grooves *designer grooves;* you literally design them to fit perfectly with everything that's going on harmonically and rhythmically in a particular tune. In addition to having the groove skeleton (see "Rattling the groove skeleton," earlier in the chapter, for details), designer grooves also have a *groove apex,* which I discuss in the following sections.

The groove apex

An apex refers to the highlight of something, and in this case, the *groove apex* is the note that's the highlight of a groove. Every groove has an apex. The groove apex is usually either the highest or the lowest note of the groove. Either way, it's often the note furthest from the root of your groove.

Determining which note is the groove apex is open to interpretation. If you hear one note in a bass groove that really sticks out for you, that note is the groove apex.

TIP

Accenting the groove apex makes your groove fit better with the music. For example, you can accent a hit by your drummer or a special rhythm by your singer — whatever you think deserves more attention.

The upper groove apex

An *upper groove apex* is the highest note of a groove. Figure 6-13 shows a groove with a clear upper groove apex. Notice how the groove skeleton sets up the groove.

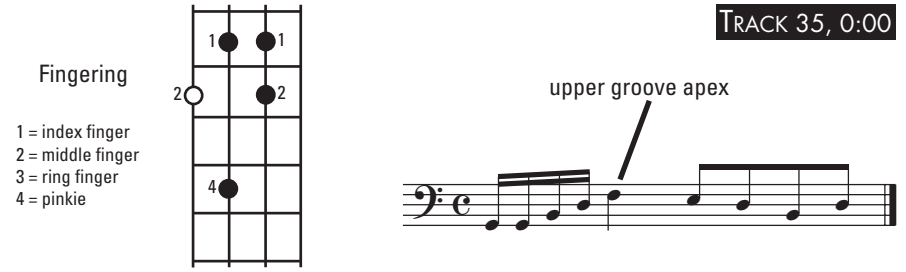


Figure 6-13: Groove with upper groove apex.

To practice playing an upper groove apex, check out the exercise in Figure 6-14. This exercise focuses on the upper groove apex only and can greatly improve your ability to execute the groove apex on any note.

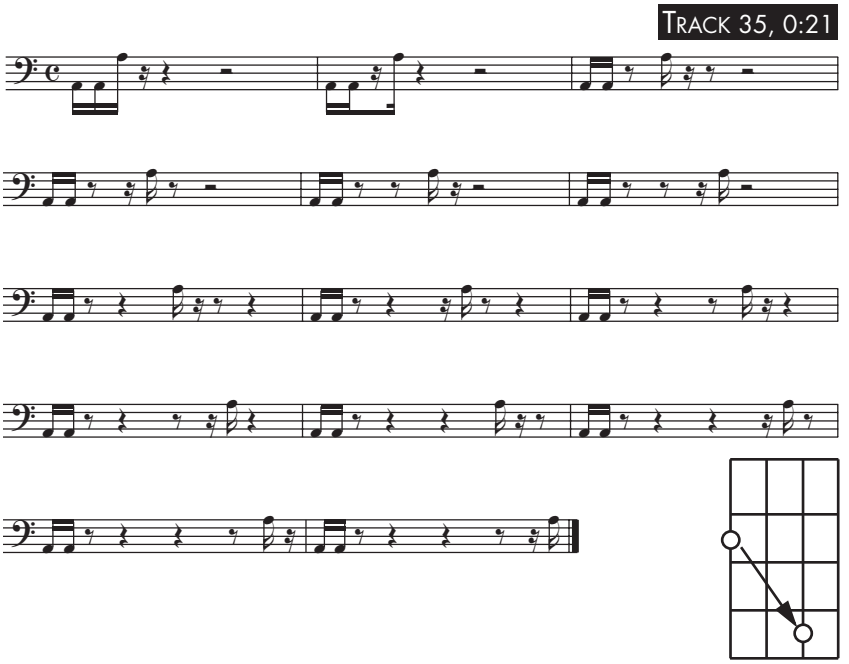


Figure 6-14: Upper groove apex exercise.

ON THE CD

Track 35 includes an example of a groove with an upper groove apex, followed by an exercise to practice playing it accurately, as in Figures 6-13 and 6-14.

The lower groove apex

The *lower groove apex* is the lowest note of a groove. Figure 6-15 shows a groove with a lower groove apex. Notice how the groove skeleton establishes the groove.

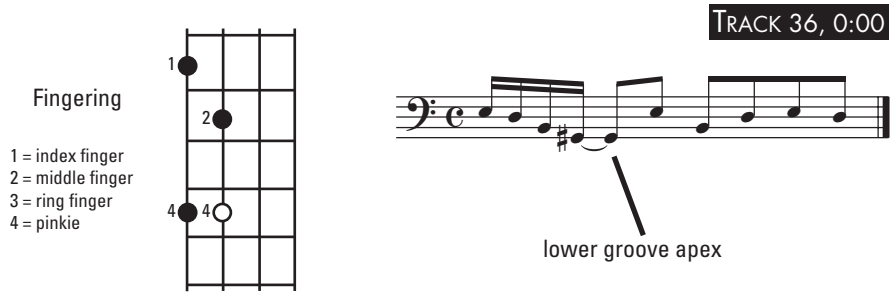


Figure 6-15: Groove with lower groove apex.

To get comfortable playing the lower groove apex, check out the exercise in Figure 6-16. This exercise shows you how to play the lower groove apex on any note.

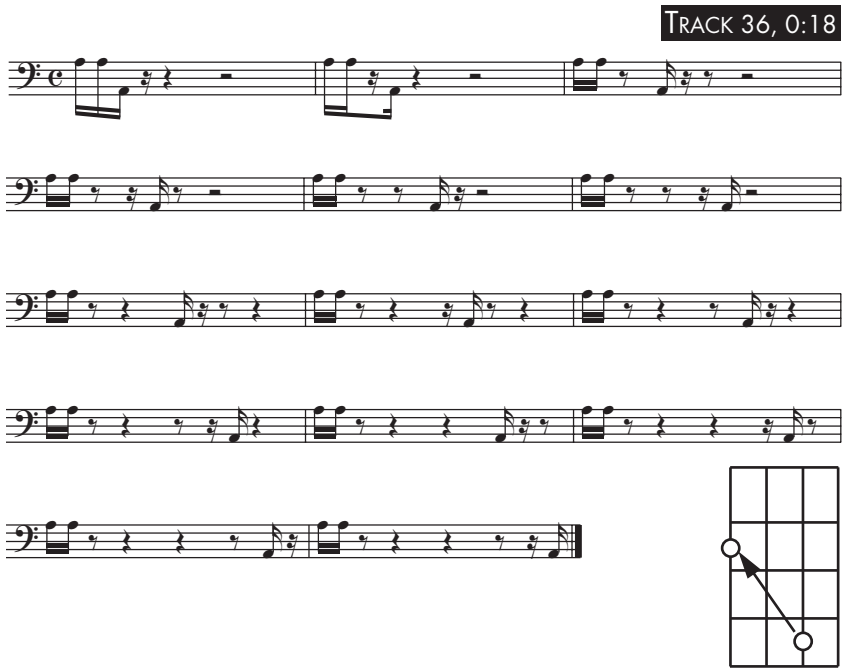


Figure 6-16: Lower groove apex exercise.

ON THE CD

On Track 36 you find an example for a lower groove apex. You can see it in Figures 6-15 and 6-16.

In both the upper groove apex exercise and the lower groove apex exercise (wow, that's a mouthful), the groove apex follows right behind the groove skeleton (the first two notes). These exercises are a great way to get comfortable playing not only grooves but rhythms as well.

After you're comfortable playing along with the CD, try playing these exercises without the CD. For even more of a challenge, try setting your metronome at varying speeds (refer to Chapter 3 for more on setting a metronome).

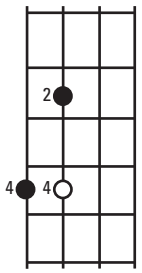
Grooving with a Drummer

No instrument is more important to your well-being as a bass player than the drums. (By the way, the bass is just as important to the well-being of a drummer.) Bassists and drummers work hand in hand to create grooves. If you want to build great grooves (and great relationships) with drummers, you need to know what all the different drums on a drum set sound like and what they're generally used for. This section gives you a quick overview of the different types of drums. If you want to read more, you can always check out *Drums For Dummies,* 2nd Edition, by Jeff Strong (Wiley).

The bass drum

The bass drum is the lowest-sounding drum on the drum set. This drum is very closely aligned with your part as a bass player. Generally speaking, drummers play the bass drum on the first beat of a measure to start the groove and then play it at least once more within that measure. If you play notes that match the rhythm of the bass drum, you'll fit right in. Figure 6-17 shows you how to match the rhythm of the bass drum.

You can listen to Track 37 on the CD for a demonstration of how the bass drum sounds.



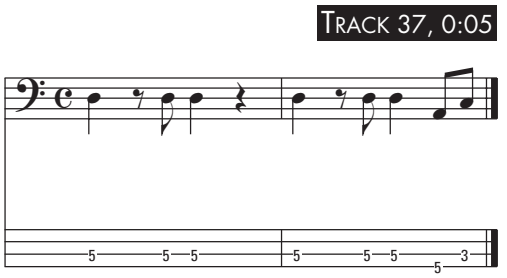


Figure 6-17: Grooving with the bass drum.

The snare drum

The snare drum is the loudest drum on the drum set. This drum is usually played on the *backbeat* (beats 2 and 4) of each measure. You can match up one of your notes with the snare drum, or you can create some *sonic space* (which simply means that you don't play at that moment) for the snare drum as it sounds out alone. Hmmm, now there's an interesting concept: Instead of looking confused when you're lost, just give the band leader your most serious look and say that you're experimenting with sonic space.

ON THE CD

Listen to Track 37 on the CD for the sound of the snare drum (playing alongside the bass drum), and then take a look at Figure 6-18 to find out how to play with the snare and bass drums.

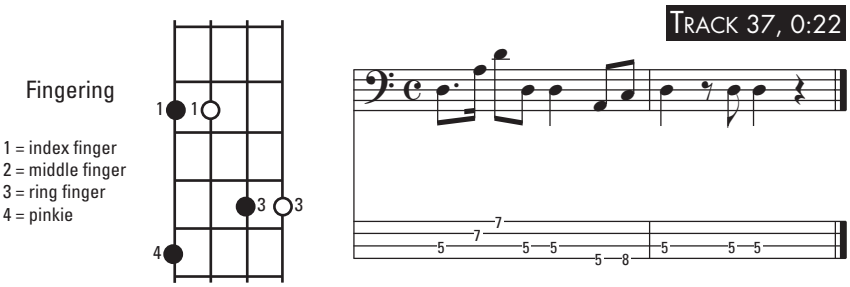


Figure 6-18: Grooving with the snare drum and the bass drum.

The hi-hat

No, the hi-hat isn't a tall cap you wear on your head. The *hi-hat* (the two interconnected circular brass plates that snap together when played) is your real-life metronome. The drummer uses the hi-hat to mark the subdivisions of the beat (usually eighth notes or sixteenth notes) and keeps the hi-hat snapping right through a groove.

Sometimes, instead of using the hi-hat, the drummer uses one of the *cymbals* (the big, circular brass plates on the drum set) to keep the rhythm. You may have trouble hearing the hi-hat at first, but after you get used to listening for its constant sound, you'll be able to play your notes easily, because the rhythm of most of the notes you play on the bass also are played (rhythmically) on the hi-hat.

Listen to Track 37 on the CD for the sound of the hi-hat playing alongside the snare and bass drums, and check out Figure 6-19 for a groove you can play with the three instruments.

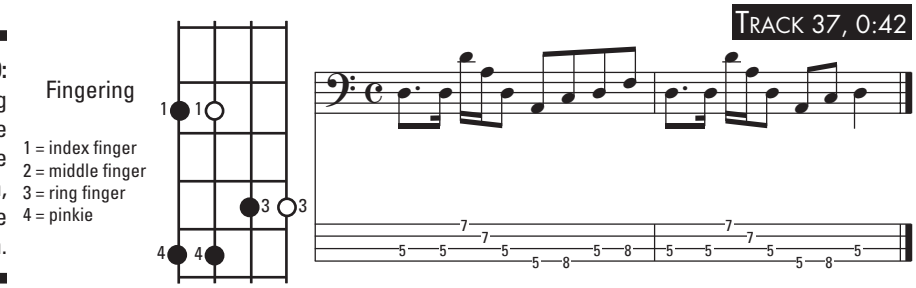


Figure 6-19: Grooving with the hi-hat, the snare drum, and the bass drum.

Jammin' With Other Musicians

Jammin' is the all-important yet elusive activity that musicians do to get to know each other and create some memorable music in the process. Sometimes the jam participants agree on a chord or even on a set of chords (see Chapter 5 for more information) ahead of time, but in its purest form a jam starts by someone playing and the rest of the band joining in. As you can imagine, jam sessions can get pretty chaotic — sort of like a bunch of people riding their bicycles crisscross in a deserted parking lot at full tilt at night in total darkness. Yeah, it can be painful.

So how do you join in a jam session if you don't know what anybody else is playing? Well, of course, you always can be the one who starts playing and let the other jammers figure out what to do, but I have a feeling that works only occasionally. Instead, you'll more than likely have to use your ears and figure out what sounds best in the session at hand.

You're jamming! You aren't playing a composition or somebody else's idea of a song. You're part of a creative collaboration for making music. Jamming lets you shed any fears of making mistakes. In its truest form, there are no mistakes — only choices that sound better than others. So take this as your chance to experiment. Just remember that jamming is a truly democratic process. Everybody's input is of equal importance, so go forth and create!

In the following sections, you get a clear, step-by-step guide on what to do in a jam session.

Listening for the note

In a jam session, somebody (it may not even be the person who begins the jam) comes up with a musical *phrase,* a sequence of notes that's repeated several times. Be alert for this phrase and treat it as a melody. Here's what you do to get in on the action and contribute mightily to a jam session. The first part is the "ear" part, where you have to listen.

1. **Listen for one note that sounds like it's at the center of the phrase.**

   Hum the note until you have it solidly established in your head (don't do anything else until you have a firm grasp of the note). Try to find it on your bass. See the sidebar "A trick to find a note that's in your head (or in your ear)" for the process of finding a note on your bass.

2. **Listen for a second note that seems important to the phrase.**

   Go ahead and find that note on your bass as well.

3. **See how the two notes relate to each other.**

   You need to figure out whether the two notes you've found can form a chord. I guarantee you they can; just look at Figure 6-20 for guidance.

4. **Name your two notes.**

   Knowing the names of your notes isn't absolutely essential, but it does make your life a lot easier if you know what they're called.

5. **Locate the two notes within three strings and four frets of each other on your bass.**

   Locating these notes in this way enables you to see what *interval* they form and generally where you're going to place your hand. (For more on intervals, flip to Chapter 2.)

6. **Choose your root.**

   One of the two notes you've already picked is the root. Use the diagram in Figure 6-20 to identify which one it is. At that point you know where to place your fingers: index finger on the root if it sounds minor and middle finger if it's major or dominant.

The final part of the process is the "play" part, where you get to, well, play:

1. **Fill in your chord and mode according to the root you've picked using Figure 6-20.**

   Chapter 5 provides more information on filling in your chord and mode.

2. **Settle on a groove.**

   See the earlier section "Creating Your Own Groove" to find out how to develop a groove.

3. **Jam!**

   Go ahead and find out how your groove can influence what your band mates are playing, and then play to your heart's content; this is the fun part. Don't worry about so-called "wrong" notes — just try to make the music sound good. The more you jam, the better you get.

REMEMBER

Seems pretty complicated, doesn't it? Don't worry; if you're with the right group of musicians, jamming is really a blast! Just keep listening. Jamming is like a conversation. You have to hear what the others are saying to be able to join in with relevant ideas of your own. As with everything else, the more you do it, the better you get. After you establish the prevailing harmony in a jam, the other players usually rally around you. Jamming is very much a team sport, so don't fret it. (Well, actually *do* fret the notes, but don't fret anything else.)

Pivoting the note

Imagine you're jamming away with a group of musicians. Things are positively hot, and your groove is simply smokin'. In fact, the music is sounding so good that you want to take it to another level and add another chord or two rather than staying on the same chord throughout the jam. In this case, it's time to pivot the note!

A trick to finding a note that's in your head (or in your ear)

When you're looking for a specific note, whether it's one you're hearing in your mind or one you're hearing someone else play or sing, use this *one-string chromatic* approach to make finding it more efficient: Play only on your G string and play only one fret at a time, step by step in sequence, from the open G string to the octave G at the double dot of your fingerboard. One of these notes is a match for the one you're hearing and a couple of others simply sound good with it. By playing the 12 notes in that range, you're covering all the notes in the chromatic system, leaving none out. Staying on one string allows you to keep track of which notes you've played and eliminated; otherwise you may be jumping around the fingerboard without a plan, wasting time and energy on notes you've already tried. The G string is the highest pitched string on your bass and the notes are easiest to hear, so take a ride on that G string. (Oh, and keep it clean in the G-string joke department.)

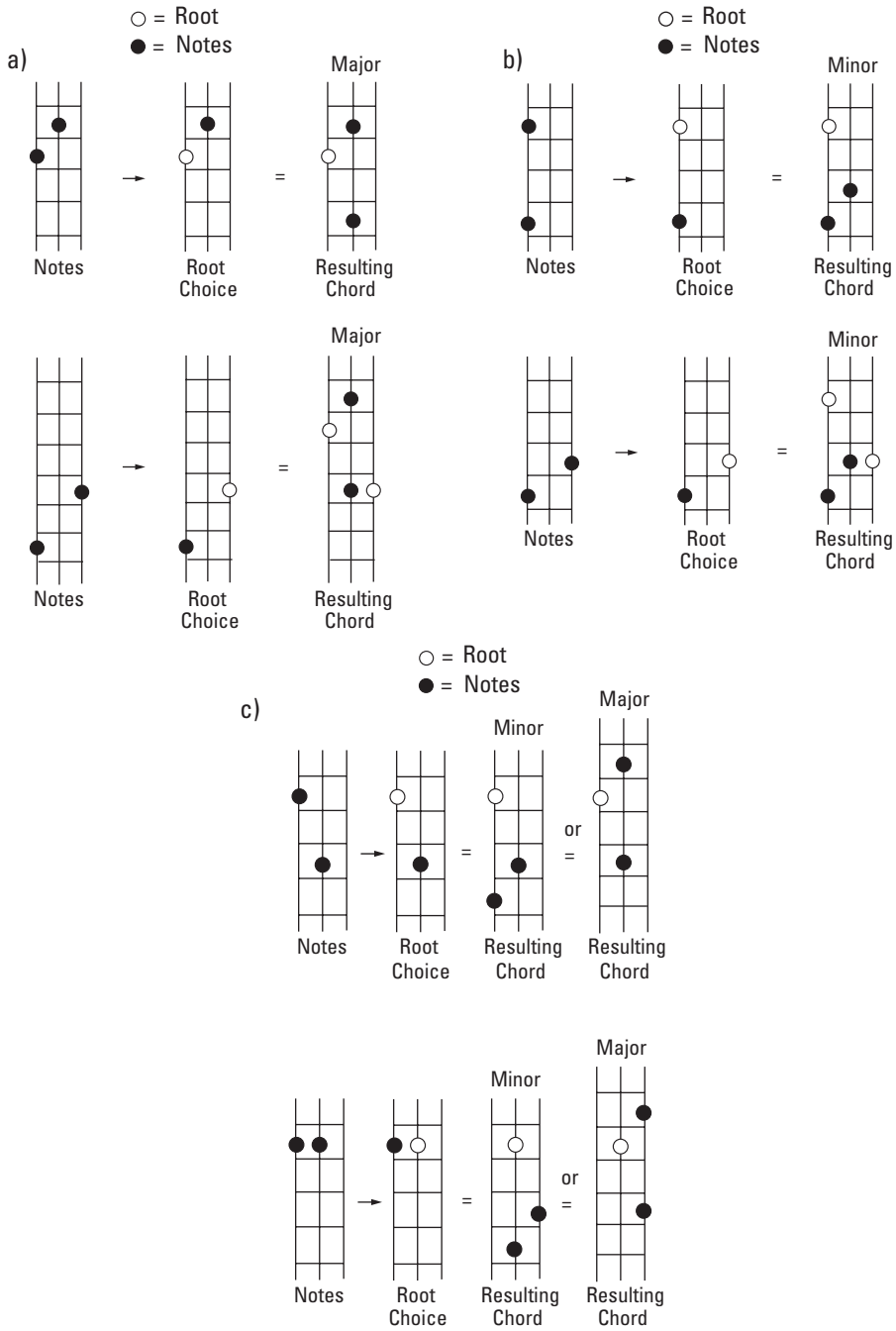


Figure 6-20: Finding the root in a two-note relationship.

Pivoting the note that's at the center of your jam harmony allows you to create new chords that relate to it and to each other. The new chords then give the music a fresh direction by adding variety and making it more interesting. After all, no matter how smokin' hot a groove is, how interesting can you make a song if it stays on the same chord for three hours?

The trick to pivoting a note is to take the central note of the chord and move it away from the center. (Refer to the preceding section for help in finding the central note of the chord.) Of course, the note is still the same — it's really not going anywhere — but the movement is implied. You actually move the new chords around the note — that's the pivot.

When you hear a note that's central to a musical phrase or a chord or scale, usually you hear it as the root (see Chapter 5 for more on chords, scales, and roots). You can add to that root note another note in a specific place that turns the original root note into a different chord tone, the 3rd for example, of a different chord. In other words, the note that was the root of one chord is now the 3rd of another chord, and a different note becomes the new root. Your original note is still an important part of the harmony, but it's not quite so central anymore. How can you get away with simply changing the root in the harmony? You're the bassist and roots are *your* business!

The root is the bassist's business, whether *you're* choosing it or you're listening for it from another player, especially from the soloist (or whoever's playing the melody). Always listen to the other players, too, because sometimes another player may initiate a new chord sound, in which case you follow the guidelines of the previous section for finding two central notes. The diagram in Figure 6-21 shows you the best choices for pivoting the central note.

When you create new chords in a jam, keep in mind that it's easier to move around from chord to chord if you're playing a simple groove rather than a complex one. (Check out the earlier section "Covering the 'basses': Creating dominant, minor, and major grooves" for more information on simple and complex grooves.) The rule of thumb is this: The more chords you have and the faster they change, the simpler your groove needs to be. Often the best initial move is to simply lay down a pumping eighth note rhythm on the root. (Head to Chapter 8 for the eighth note rhythm on the root.)

Let your own ear be the final judge whether a choice you make sounds good or not; give it a little time to ferment, especially in a jam session. To let a groove ferment, you have to keep your choice of chords consistent and repeat them over and over again to give the other players a chance to get familiar with the duration and sequence of your chords (also called *progression*) and to respond with musical phrases that enhance the new progression.

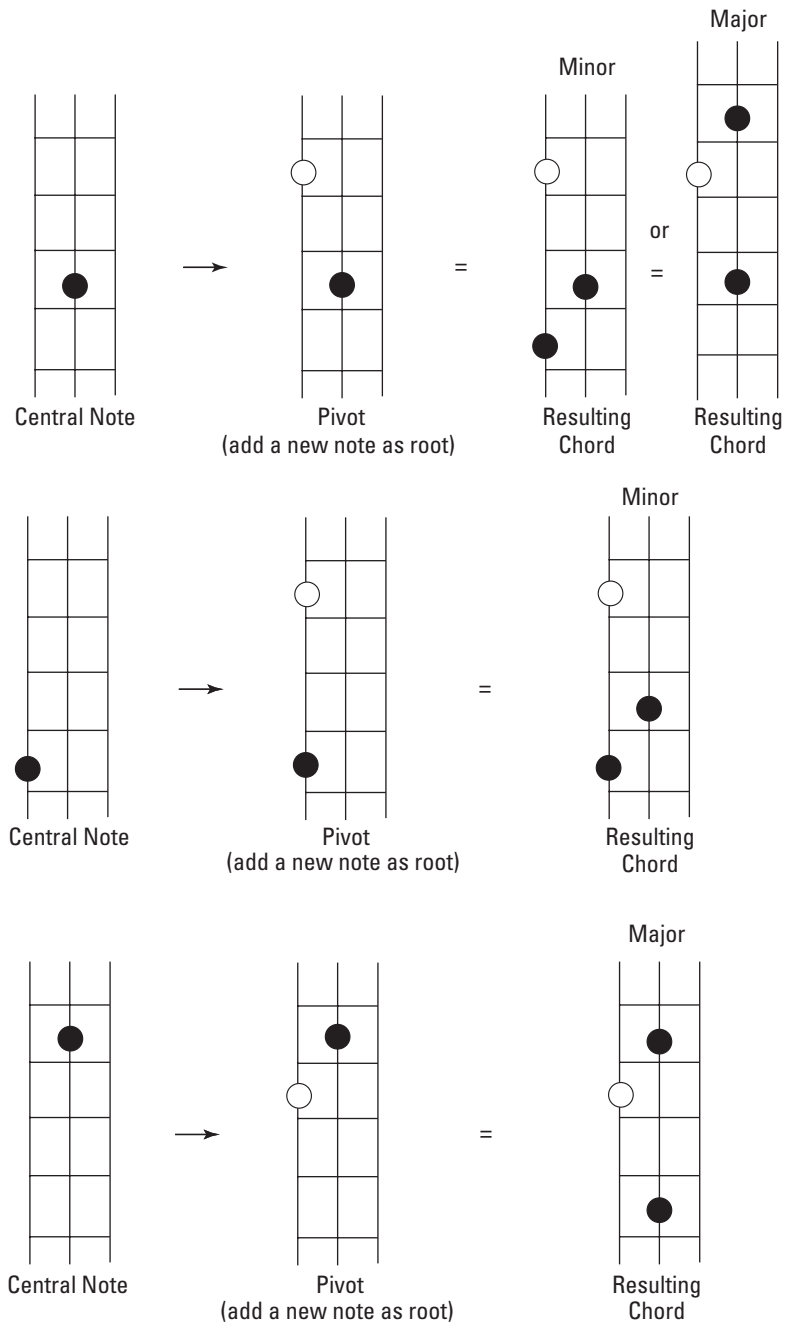


Figure 6-21: The best choices for pivoting a note and the resulting chords.

Chapter 7

Going Solo: Playing Solos and Fills

In This Chapter

- Choosing solo scales based on your chord tonality
- Playing fills to make your groove dazzle

Imagine that you're playing with a great bunch of musicians and you're holding down a monster groove so solidly that the music takes on a life of its own (see Chapter 6 for more on creating a groove). In fact, things are sounding so good that the other musicians decide to reward you with a solo — a chance to show off your bass *chops* (bass-speak for "skills"). Looks like you need to prepare for your moment in the sun, because when the time comes for your solo, you have to *burn* (bass-speak for "showing off your chops").

This chapter presents three surefire scales that you can use to create a solo or a fill (a mini-solo) that will make you and everyone else *smoke* (bass-speak for "dazzle").

Soloing: Your Moment to Shine

A *solo* is the music (musical and rhythmic line) you create when you're the featured player in a band. Solos usually are reserved for the traditional melody instruments, such as the guitar, saxophone, and trumpet, but bassists also are asked to perform a solo on occasion.

Making a solo sound good is a bit more challenging for the bassist, because the sound of the instrument is very deep and you don't have a groove backing you. (You can't play a groove and a solo at the same time.) Despite these challenges, bass solos can be very effective in the hands of a good player.

The following sections introduce some common scales that are sure to help you create a killer solo for your time in the sun.

Playing with the blues scale: A favorite solo spice

The *six-note blues scale* is one of the most commonly used scales in soloing — and with good reason: It's comfortable to play, it's easy to move around, and it sounds great. The blues scale is a one-size-fits-all scale, no matter what the chord tonality (major, minor, or dominant). However, as with those one-size-fits-all pieces of clothing, the blues scale doesn't always give you a perfect fit. The notes may not relate perfectly with all the notes in the chord.

When you create a solo with the blues scale, it of course will sound bluesy. Let your ears be the judge of which notes you can linger on and which notes you should use as *passing tones* (unaccented notes that connect two strong notes). It's just like salt for the soup: When you add the right amount, it's delicious; when you use too much, you spoil the broth.

You need three strings to complete the blues scale, so start on either the E or A string — whichever string the root of the chord you're playing is on (see Chapter 5 for more about chords). The following steps explain how to play a blues scale, and Figure 7-1 shows the structure of the blues scale.

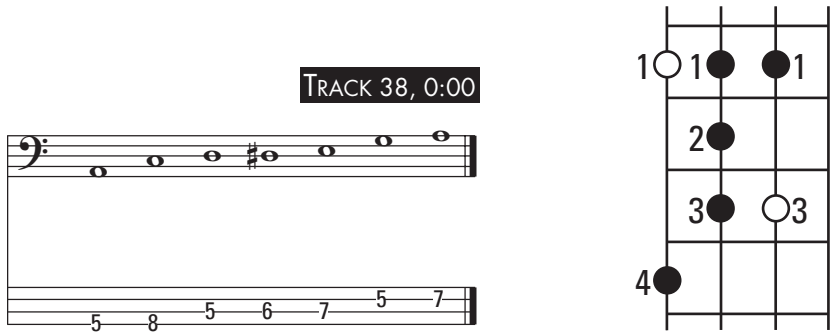


Figure 7-1: The blues scale.

1. **Press the index finger of your left hand down on the root of the chord (on the E or A string) and play the note.**
2. **Press your pinkie down on the same string and play the note.**

   This note is ♭3 (flat 3); it's one of the *blue* (slightly dissonant) notes.
3. **Press your index finger down on the next higher (thinner) string and play the note.**

   This note is a 4; it sounds fairly neutral.

4. **Press your middle finger down on the same string and play the note.**

   This note is a ♯4 (sharp 4); it's another blue note.

5. **Press your ring finger down on the same string and play the note.**

   This note is a 5; it's present in almost all chords.

6. **Press your index finger down on the next higher (thinner) string and play the note.**

   This note is a ♭7 (flat 7); it's usually a cool choice.

7. **Press your ring finger down on the same string and play the note.**

   This note is your octave; you've arrived at the root again.

Three strings. No shifts. The blues scale couldn't be easier.

TIP

You can use the notes of the blues scale in any order — not just straight up and down. You also can use the blues scale over any chord: major, minor, or dominant. Use the blues scale tastefully and sparingly; don't overdo it.

Figure 7-2 shows you some useful blues-scale licks. A lick, in this case, doesn't refer to how your dog welcomes you home. A *lick* is a short melodic phrase you play in a solo — a solo is a succession of licks. You can collect a repertoire of licks from your favorite musicians, and you also can create some of your own.

ON THE CD

On Track 38 you can hear what a blues scale (in this case in A) sounds like, followed by three distinctive blues scale licks (each repeated four times). To view the fingering for each, look at Figures 7-1 and 7-2.

Jamming with the minor pentatonic scale: No wrong notes

The structure of the minor pentatonic scale is very similar to the blues scale (which I cover in the section "Playing with the blues scale: A favorite solo spice"). However, the *minor pentatonic scale* has only five different notes: one fewer than the six-note blues scale.

You use the minor pentatonic scale when the tonality of the chord is minor. (For more on chord tonality, see Chapter 5.) You need to make sure that you have three strings available to complete the scale, so find your root on the E or A string. The following steps explain how to play the minor pentatonic scale, and Figure 7-3 shows the pattern of the minor pentatonic scale.

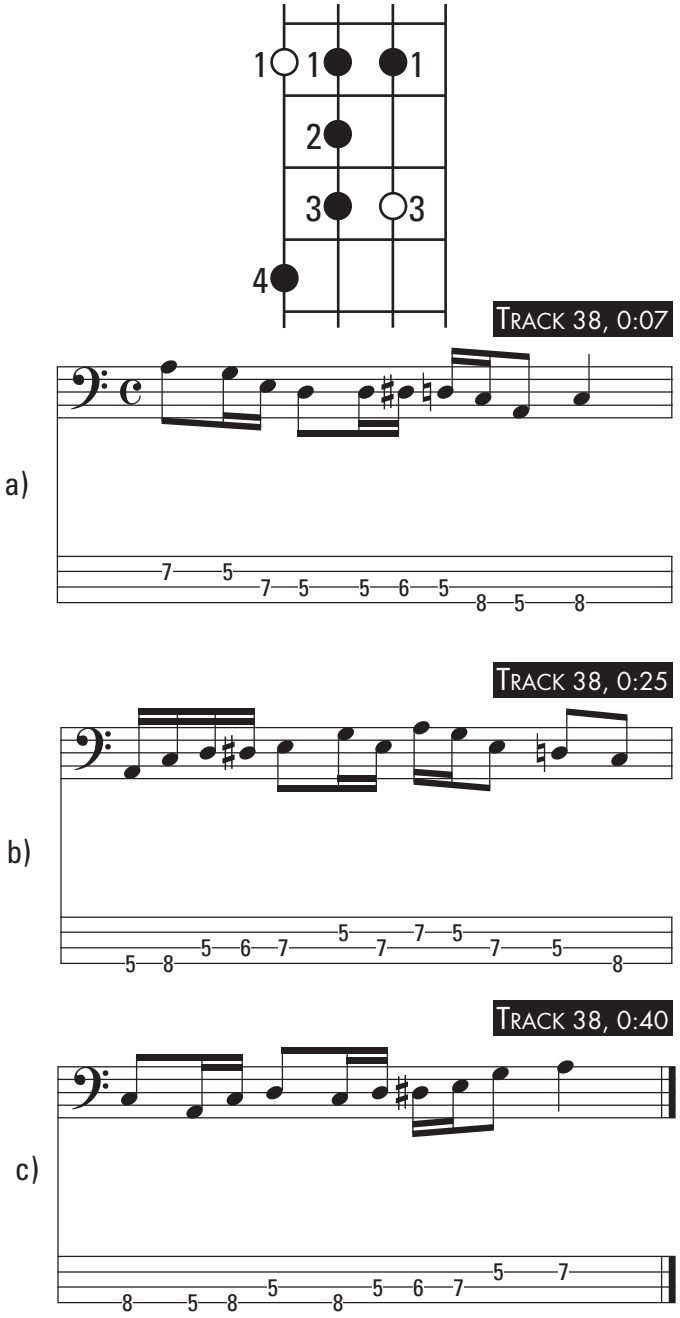


Figure 7-2: Blues-scale licks.

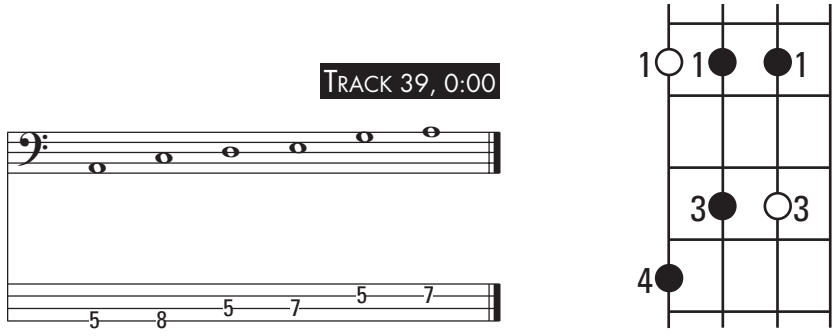


Figure 7-3: The minor pentatonic scale.

1. **Press the index finger of your left hand down on the root of the chord (on the E or A string) and play the note.**
2. **Press your pinkie down on the same string and play the note.**

   This note is a ♭3 (flat 3); it's one of the main ingredients of the minor chord.
3. **Press your index finger down on the next higher (thinner) string and play the note.**

   This note is a 4; it's part of the minor scale.
4. **Press your ring finger down on the same string and play the note.**

   This note is a 5; it's another main ingredient of the minor chord.
5. **Press your index finger down on the next higher (thinner) string and play the note.**

   This note is a ♭7 (flat 7); it's yet another main ingredient of the minor chord.
6. **Press your ring finger down on the same string and play the note.**

   This note is your octave; you've arrived at the root again.

Voilà! Three strings. No shifts. No problem.

TIP

As with the blues scale, you can use the notes of the minor pentatonic scale in any order when playing your solo — not just straight up and down. Use this scale over any minor chord. All the notes sound good when you play them over a minor chord, so you can land on any of them. If you find that your solo needs spice, use the blues scale. (Flip to the earlier section "Playing with the blues scale: A favorite solo spice," for more information.)

Figure 7-4 shows some useful licks you can play using the minor pentatonic scale. This scale comes in handy in every solo, so add it to your repertoire.

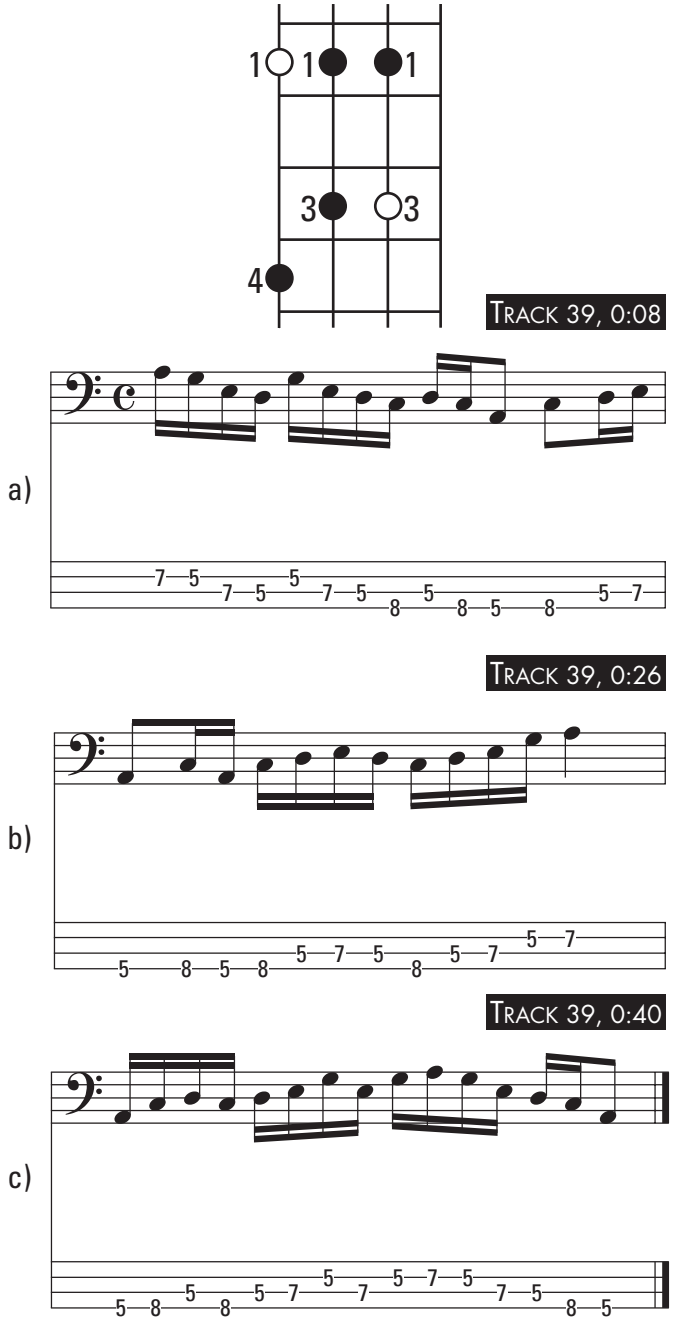


Figure 7-4: Minor pentatonic scale licks.

ON THE CD

You can hear the minor pentatonic scale and three minor pentatonic licks on Track 39. Keep an eye on Figures 7-3 and 7-4 to follow along.

Using the major pentatonic scale: Smooth as can be

You can use the *major pentatonic scale* for two different chord tonalities: the major chord and the dominant chord. Think of this scale as a two-for-one deal. (For more on major and dominant chords, see Chapter 5.)

You need three strings to complete the major pentatonic scale, so start it on the E or A string. The following steps explain how to play the major pentatonic scale, and Figure 7-5 shows the structure of the major pentatonic scale.

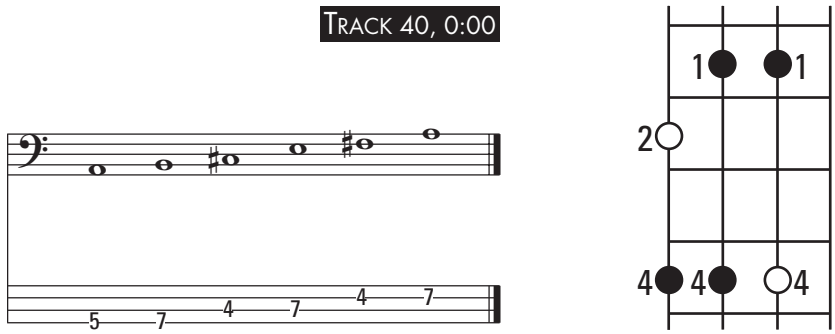


Figure 7-5: The major pentatonic scale.

1. **Press the middle finger of your left hand down on the root of the chord (on the E or A string) and play the note.**
2. **Press your pinkie down on the same string and play the note.**

   This note is a 2; it's a fairly neutral note that's part of the scales of both the major and dominant chords.
3. **Press your index finger down on the next higher (thinner) string and play the note.**

   This note is a 3; it's one of the main ingredients of both the major and dominant chords.
4. **Press your pinkie down on the same string and play the note.**

   This note is a 5; it's another main ingredient of the major and dominant chords.

5. **Press your index finger down on the next higher (thinner) string and play the note.**

   This note is a 6; it's another neutral note that's part of the scales used for major and dominant chords.

6. **Press your pinkie down on the same string and play the note.**

   This note is your octave; you've arrived at the root again.

Three strings. No shifts. Okay, you're ready for the limelight.

You can use the notes of the major pentatonic scale in any order — not just straight up and down. Play this scale for any major or dominant chord. All the notes of the major pentatonic scale sound good with a major or dominant chord, so you're perfectly safe landing on any of them. If you find that things start to sound bland, you can add some spice in the form of the blues scale. (See "Playing with the blues scale: A favorite solo spice," earlier in the chapter, for more information.)

Figure 7-6 shows some specific licks you can use with the major pentatonic scale. You can play these licks throughout your solo.

You can hear the major pentatonic scale on Track 40, followed by three distinct major pentatonic licks as shown in Figures 7-5 and 7-6.

Moving from chord to chord

If your band is playing a tune and all of a sudden your solo comes up, don't worry. The blues, minor pentatonic, and major pentatonic scales (which I describe in the three previous sections) give you plenty of ammunition for playing a cool solo.

When performing a solo, you use the minor pentatonic scale for a minor chord, the major pentatonic scale for a major or dominant chord, and the blues scale for any chord. The following steps give you some guidelines to follow when soloing for a tune that has all three of the common chords (minor, major, and dominant). These steps tell you how to approach each individual chord:

1. **Find the root of the chord.**

   You need to make sure you have enough strings to cover the entire scale, so stick with the E and A strings.

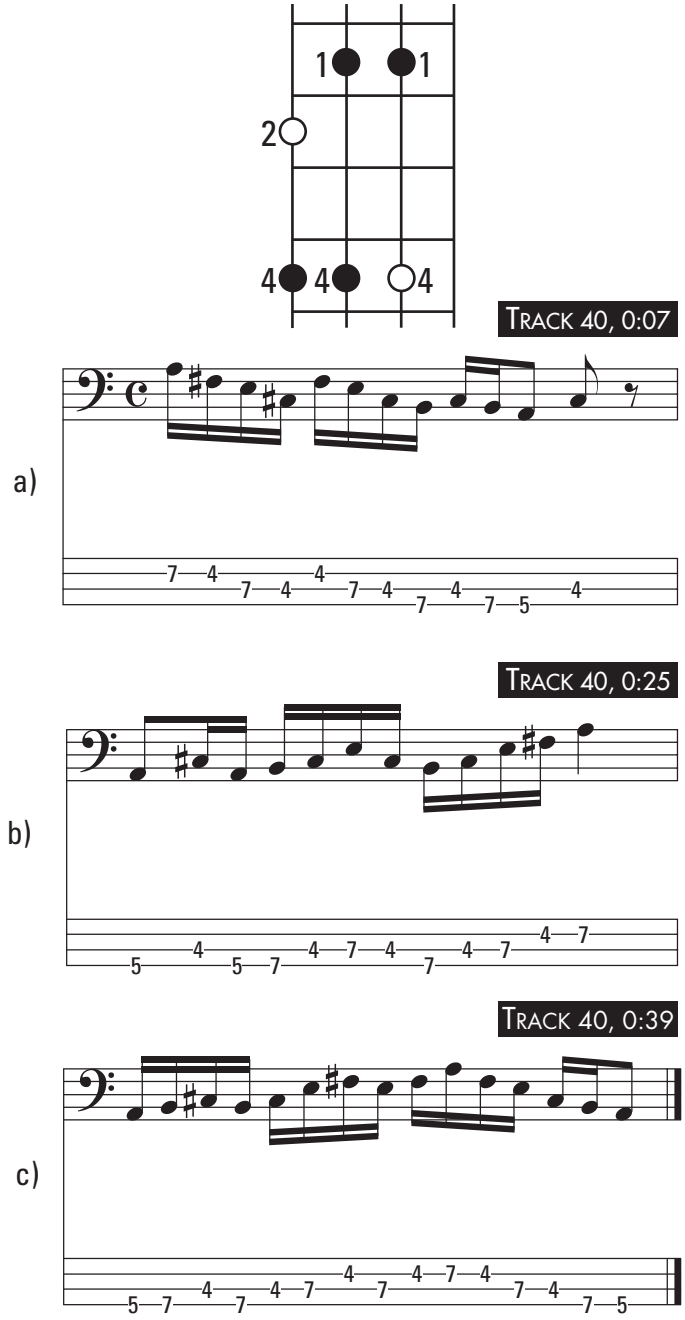


Figure 7-6: Major pentatonic scale licks.

2. **Determine whether the chord is minor, major, or dominant.**
   - **If the chord is minor, place your index finger on the root of the chord.** You're now in position to execute the minor pentatonic scale for this chord.
   - **If the chord is either major or dominant, place your middle finger on the root of the chord.** You're now in position to execute the major pentatonic scale for this chord.
3. **Add some spice to your solo by occasionally placing your index finger on the root of any chord and playing a blues-scale lick.**

   Check out "Playing with the blues scale: A favorite solo spice," earlier in the chapter, to find out more.

ON THE CD

Figure 7-7 shows you a chord chart for a tune. Listen to Track 41 on the CD for samples of soloing over these chords, and then try coming up with your own solo.

TRACK 41

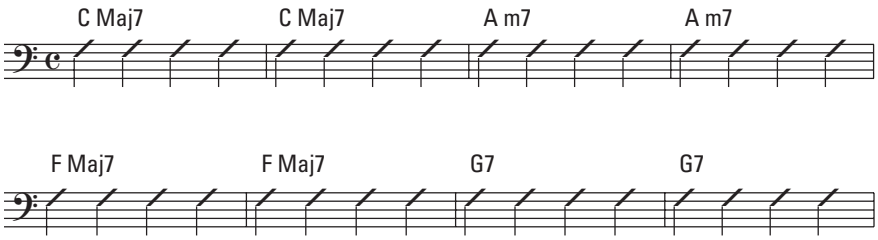


Figure 7-7: Chord chart for soloing.

Creating Fills without Any Help from Your Dentist

Fills are mini-solos that give grooves a little flash every now and then. (Check out Chapter 6 if you aren't sure what a groove is.) The purpose of the fill is to

- Lead you back to the beginning of the groove
- Give your *line* (the bass part you're playing) some variety
- Fill a little space when the rest of the band is quiet

A fill works the same way as a solo: You use the minor pentatonic scale as a fill when playing a minor chord, the major pentatonic scale as a fill when playing a major or dominant chord, and the blues scale as a fill when playing any chord. (Refer to "Soloing: Your Moment to Shine," earlier in this chapter, for more details on how to use these scales as solos.)

A fill is usually short (only about two beats long), so you need to fit the notes of the fill within the two beats and blend them smoothly with the other notes.

A match made in heaven: Connecting your fill to the groove

You can take more liberties in terms of rhythm with a solo than you can with a fill. Because fills are a part of the groove, the rhythm for the fill has to relate closely to the rhythm of the groove.

When you put a fill into a groove, you need to be acutely aware of the number of beats you have to fill before returning to the beginning of the groove. You can't miss the beginning of a groove — not even for the greatest of fills.

Timing a fill

A fill within a groove lasts for about two beats — the *last* two beats of a measure. In other words, you play beats one and two (the first two beats of the measure) as a regular groove, and then you replace beats three and four (the last part of your groove) with a fill.

Don't play a fill every time you play a groove, because it will obscure the groove, which is the sound the band depends on to guide them in rhythm and harmony. A fill is usually only played every fourth measure or every eighth measure.

Figure 7-8 shows examples of fills for major, minor, and dominant chords using eighth notes, triplets, and sixteenth notes. The following list guides you step by step through the process of creating a fill.

1. **Establish a groove.**

   See Chapter 6 to find out how to establish a groove.

2. **Determine where the third beat starts in your groove.**

   Play the groove up to the third beat, because you'll be substituting the fill for beats three and four.

3. **Determine how many notes you can hit in two beats (beats three and four).**

   The two beats for the fill have a total of four eighth notes, six triplets, or eight sixteenth notes. (See Chapter 3 for more about rhythms.) A lot depends on the tempo of the groove and on how accurately you can fit the notes into the two beats of the fill before the first note of the next groove. You can fit more notes into a fill at slower tempos.

4. **Work out a fill using the number of notes you can play, using the appropriate pentatonic or blues scale for the chord of the groove.**

   For details on how the different scales relate to the different chords, see "Soloing: Your Moment to Shine," earlier in this chapter.

5. **Practice going back and forth between the groove and the fill until your transitions are seamless.**

   In order to create a successful fill, your groove must flow without hesitation.

6. **Play your fill no more than every four or eight bars so that each fill sounds special.**

   If you play your fill more than every four or eight bars, it will just sound like another groove.

ON THE CD

On Track 42 listen to examples of two-beat fills. All the fills have different subdivisions, the first three (Figure 7-8a) subdivide the beat into eighth notes, the next three (Figure 7-8b) into triplets, and finally the last three (Figure 7-8c) subdivide the beat into sixteenth notes. Each group of three uses first the blues scale for the fill, then the minor pentatonic, and last but not least the major pentatonic.

When you feel comfortable playing the fills from Figure 7-8, incorporate them into some of your more complex grooves. (The grooves in Figure 7-8 are simply two quarter notes played on the first two beats so you can concentrate on getting the fills right.) You also can create a collection of your own favorite fills and incorporate them into your playing.

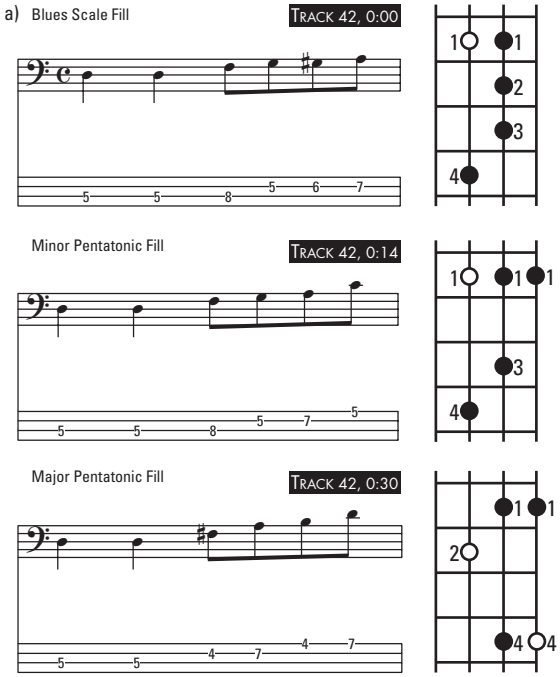


Figure 7-8 (a): Two-beat fills.

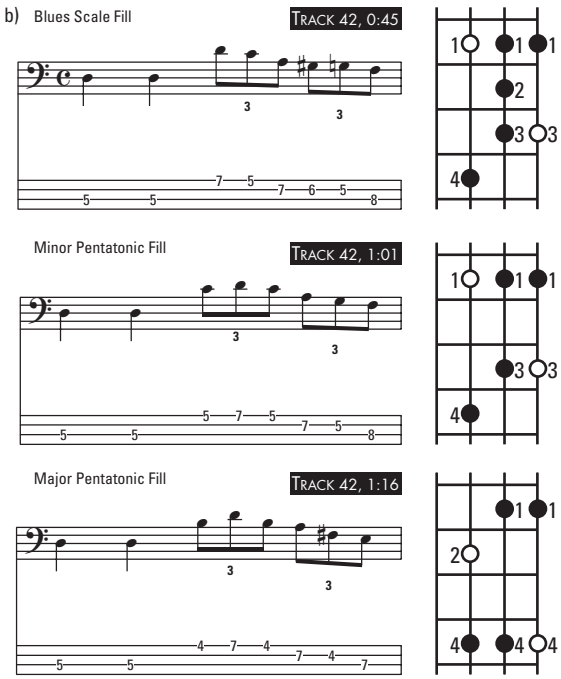


Figure 7-8 (b): Two-beat fills.

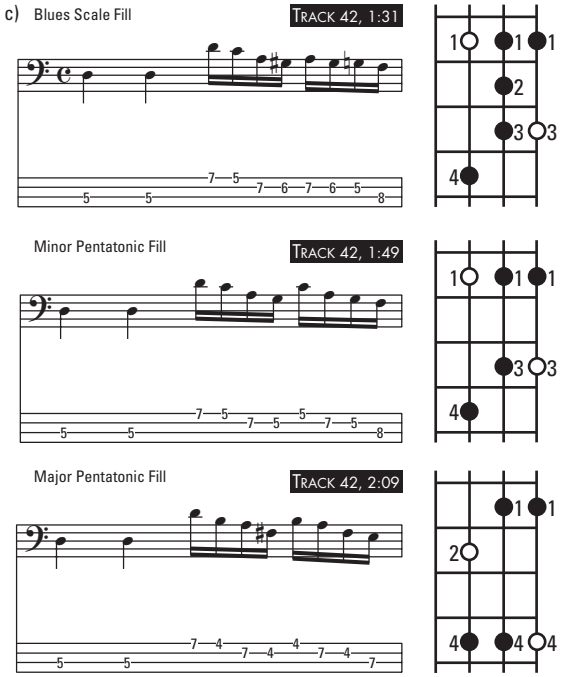


Figure 7-8 (c): Two-beat fills.

Part IV

Using the Correct Accompaniment for Each Genre

In this part . . .

Whether you're into rock, pop, jazz, funk, blues, country, reggae, or world music, this part helps you maneuver your bass lines through any genre of music that you may encounter. Versatility is a key asset for any bass player, and Part IV will help you build a repertoire of grooves to draw from.

Chapter 8

Rock On! Getting Down with the Rock Styles

In This Chapter

- Playing rock 'n' roll
- Chipping away at hard and prog rock
- Understanding pop rock
- Finding out about blues rock
- Saddling up with country rock
- Experimenting with a universal groove

The term *rock* encompasses a number of different styles — ranging from country rock to hard rock — all of which have certain traits in common. All rock styles use rhythms dominated by driving eighth notes. (For more on rhythm, see Chapter 3.) The bassist locks in tightly with the drums and plays grooves that stress the *root,* the first note of a scale. (You can find out about grooves in Chapter 6.) The main difference between each rock style, however, lies in the rhythmic and melodic feel of the bass lines.

In this chapter, I show you how to rock out with attitude, even if you don't have a single stitch of black clothing in your wardrobe. Strap on your bass and rock the joint. You have enough material in this chapter to keep jammin' for quite a while.

TIP

You can play any of the grooves featured in this chapter in any key (starting with any root) by using the grids in the figures. You just have to make sure you have enough frets and strings at your disposal — usually four or five frets and three strings.

Rock 'n' Roll: The Good Old Standby

Rock 'n' roll refers to the style of rock that originated in the 1950s and '60s (think Elvis Presley or Buddy Holly). The bassist maintains a quarter-note or eighth-note rhythm and a distinctive melodic bass line that spells out the harmony for the band and the listener. Check out Figure 8-1 for an example of a rock 'n' roll accompaniment. The example uses one note — the root — with an eighth-note rhythm. (The open circle on the grid represents the root.)

ON THE CD

As you listen to Track 43, notice how the rhythm of the notes in Figure 8-1 is evenly divided as well as how the bass locks in with the drums.

TRACK 43, 0:00

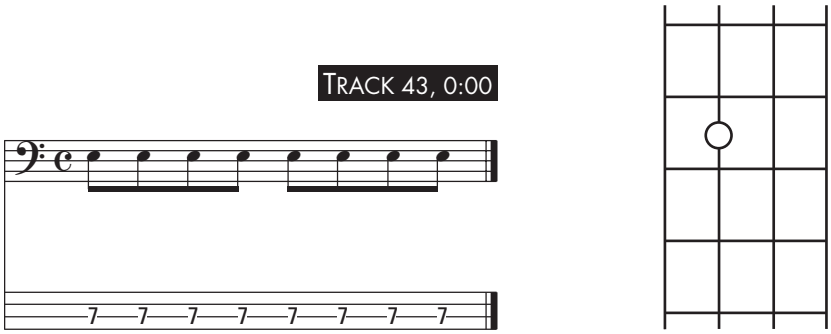


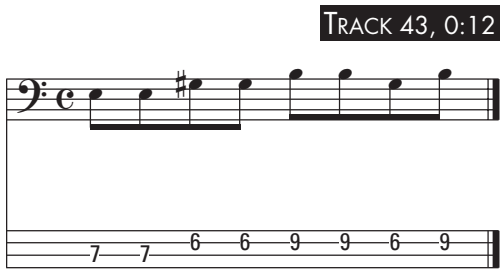
Figure 8-1: Rock 'n' roll groove using only the root.

You can start the groove in Figure 8-1 with any finger, because only one note is used — the root. You also don't have to worry about the chord tonality. (Chapter 5 discusses tonality.)

In Figure 8-2, you add the 3 and 5 (the third and fifth notes of the major scale) to the groove to form the chord. (Check out Chapter 5 for some general info on chords.) In the grid, the root is the open circle, and the solid black dots are the other chord tones (the notes in the chord). Figure 8-2 has to be played with your middle finger on the root to avoid shifting during the groove.

ON THE CD

Notice how the eighth notes are driving the rhythm in the grooves from Figures 8-2 through 8-4, which you can listen to on the CD (Track 43). The bass and drums are tightly locked in with each other. The choice of the bass notes indicates to the band members the tonality of the chords: major, minor, or dominant.



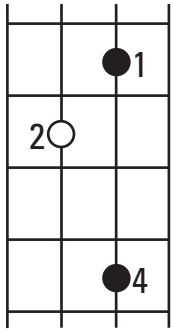
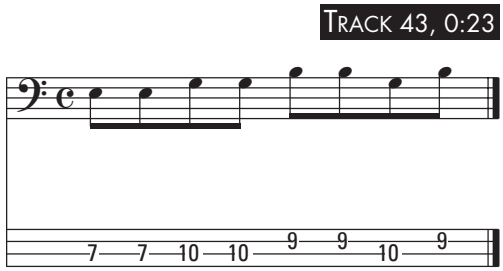


Figure 8-2: Rock 'n' roll groove using notes from the chord.

You can alter the examples in this chapter to fit any tonality. Simply lower the regular 3 to a ♭3 to change the tonality from major to minor, or raise the ♭3 to a regular 3 to change it from minor to major. This change isn't a major problem, just a minor adjustment.

The groove in Figure 8-3 is the same as the groove shown in Figure 8-2 with one exception: The groove in Figure 8-3 has a minor 3 (♭3) instead of a major 3 (or 3). The lowering of the major 3 to the ♭3 changes the entire chord into a minor chord. Start this groove with your index finger on the root to avoid any unnecessary shifting of your left hand.



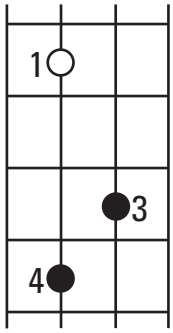


Figure 8-3: Rock 'n' roll groove in minor using notes from the chord.

Figure 8-4 shows an example of a more elaborate rock 'n' roll groove using notes that come not only from the major chord but also from the Mixolydian mode (or scale). (See Chapter 5 for a discussion of modes, including the Mixolydian.) Start this groove with your middle finger on the root.

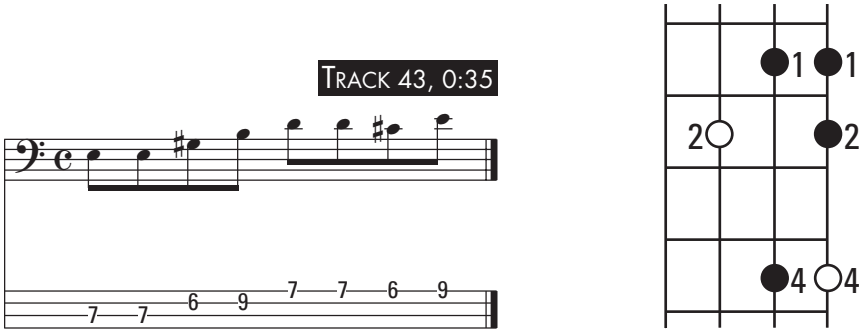


Figure 8-4: Rock 'n' roll groove using notes from the chord and mode.

The groove in Figure 8-4 fits nicely over a dominant chord, which is a common chord in rock 'n' roll. The dominant chord consists of the root, 3, 5, and ♭7 of the Mixolydian mode. Figure 8-5 shows you the thought process behind the creation of this groove.

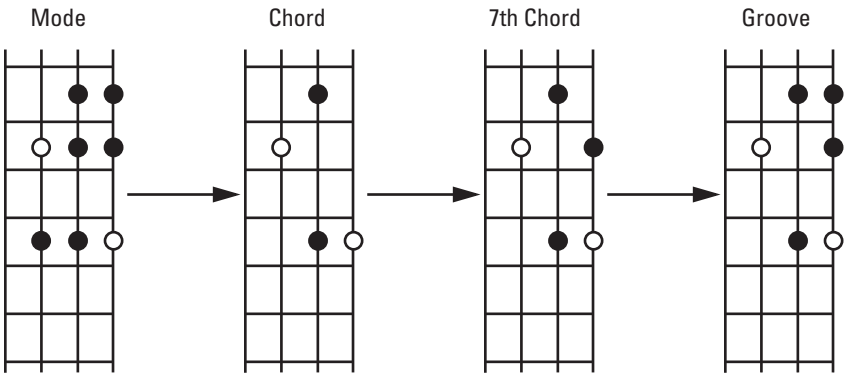


Figure 8-5: Thought process from mode and chord to groove.

For a denser rock 'n' roll groove, check out Figure 8-6, which includes not only notes from the chord and its related mode (Mixolydian in this case) but also *chromatic tones,* which are notes outside the regular mode that lead to the notes in the chord (see Chapter 5 for more on chromatic tones).

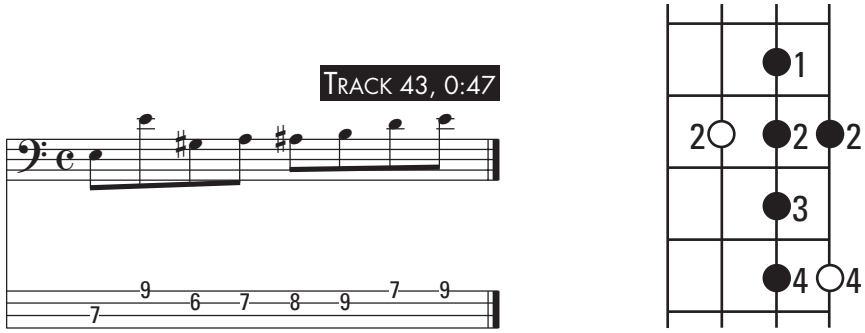


Figure 8-6: Rock 'n' roll box groove.

You can play all the notes of this groove in the same position as long as you start it with your middle finger. I call this a *box groove* because the positioning of the notes forms a *box;* your left hand is positioned so that your fingers can reach all the notes without shifting.

You can alter the groove from Figure 8-6 to play over a minor tonality by lowering the 3 to ♭3, which converts the dominant chord tonality into a minor tonality. Check out Figure 8-7 to see what this groove looks like in a minor tonality. To play the groove in Figure 8-7, start with your index finger on the root so you don't have to shift your left hand.

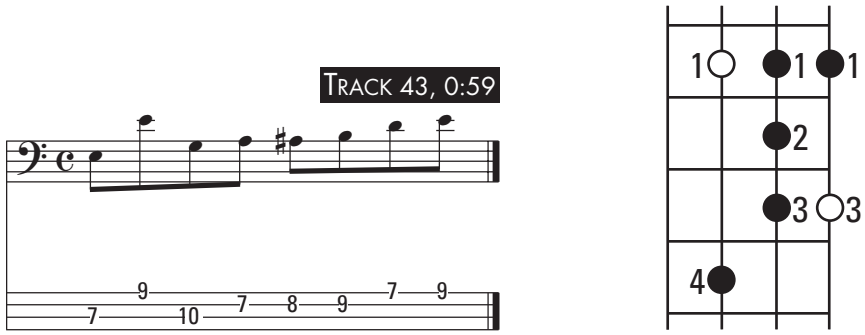
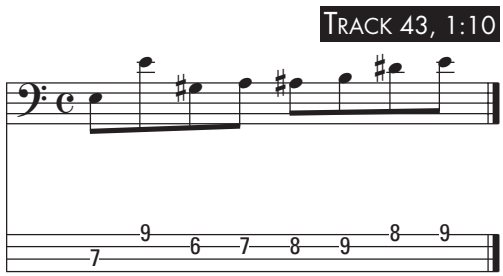


Figure 8-7: Rock 'n' roll groove in a minor tonality.

You also can convert this groove into a major 7th tonality (see Figure 8-8). To do so, raise the ♭7 of the original groove (refer to Figure 8-6) and then play the groove using a major 7th chord (root, 3, 5, and 7). Play this groove with your middle finger on the root. The major 7th tonality isn't common in rock 'n' roll, but it's still useful to know how to play it for those rare cases.



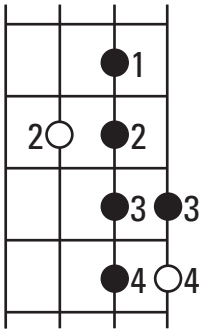
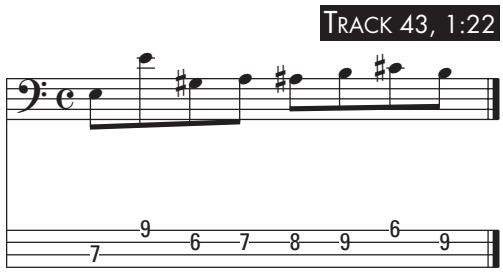


Figure 8-8: Rock 'n' roll groove in a major 7th tonality.

When accompanying a rock tune that has a major 7th tonality, you may want to substitute the 6 of the major mode for the 7 in your groove. The 6 softens the sound and makes it more pleasant to the ear. Take a look at Figure 8-9 for an example of a 6 in a major 7th tonality.



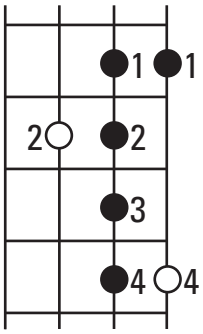


Figure 8-9: Rock 'n' roll groove with a 6.

With the 6 in place, you can use the groove in Figure 8-9 over a major 7th tonality as well as over a dominant tonality. The only difference between these two tonalities is the 7: The major 7th chord has a regular 7, and the dominant chord has a ♭7. A groove with a regular 7 clashes with a dominant chord; a groove with a ♭7 clashes with a major chord. In the groove shown in Figure 8-9, however, the 6 doesn't clash with either chord. (In fact, it sounds pretty good.) You can use this groove to give the other players of your band more leeway in their choice of notes. It doesn't lock them into having to choose between either a 7 or ♭7.

A history of rock styles from the bassist's perspective

Rock had its beginnings in the 1950s when the rhythm section (bass, guitar, drums, and piano) began to take on a more prominent role in popular music. With the invention in 1951 of the Fender Precision bass (the first popular electric bass), the electric bass guitar slowly started displacing the acoustic (upright) bass.

With the improvement of recording and sound technology, the bass could now be heard clearly instead of just being felt, and by the 1960s, the electric bass was the instrument of choice in popular music. The bass guitar gained an ever-increasing role in rock music, and bassists developed lines that were more melodic and complex to accompany the music. In the 1970s, hard rock and progressive rock emerged, along with faster and more complex bass lines — and steadily increasing volume. Bass lines of *driving sixteenth notes* (sixteenth notes played in a continuous, even stream, often on one pitch) were becoming more common in accompaniment. Rock didn't simply abandon one style in favor of the next; it absorbed each new musical trend, sharing its unique feel and attitude.

ON THE CD

When you listen to the CD track corresponding to Figures 8-6 through 8-9 (Track 43), you can hear how one groove can be adapted to fit over different tonalities: the dominant (Figure 8-6), the minor (Figure 8-7), the major 7th (Figure 8-8), and a major tonality with a 6 instead of a 7 (Figure 8-9).

REMEMBER

You can change the sound of a groove to a different tonality by changing the 3, the 7, or even the 5. Check out Chapter 5 for more on scale/chord compatibility.

Check out the sounds of Adam Clayton of U2 or of the late John Entwistle of The Who if you want to hear some great rock bassists. And while you're at it, listen to John Myung of Dream Theatre and Geddy Lee of Rush for some excellent progressive rock bass playing.

Hard Rock: Going at It Fast and Furious

Hard rock, which includes progressive rock along with metal and its numerous offspring, is the fastest category of rock. The rhythm is hard and driving, and the tempo can be downright wicked (as in superfast). You may frequently encounter sixteenth notes (see Chapter 3) and odd meters (see Chapter 12) in this style. Hard rock bass lines often are based on minor pentatonic sounds (check out Chapter 7 for pentatonic scales).

When you play *unison riffs* (licks with the same notes in the same rhythm, played together) with other band members in hard rock music, you want to get your sixteenth notes up to speed so you can keep up with the guitar player. (For an example of a typical unison riff, check out Figure 8-13.)

Listen to Tom Hamilton of Aerosmith or John Paul Jones of Led Zeppelin if you want to hear some excellent bassists who play the hard rock style.

Figure 8-10 shows a hard rock bass groove played on the root only, using a combination of eighth and sixteenth notes.

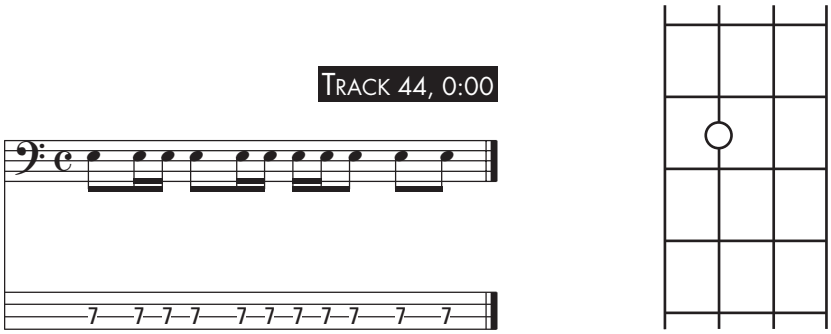
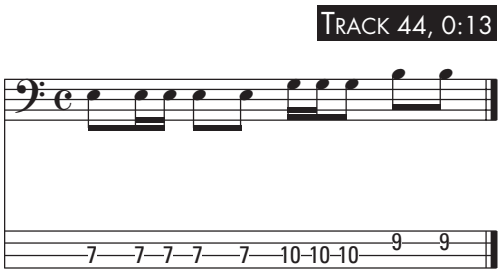


Figure 8-10: Hard rock groove using only the root.

ON THE CD

Hard rock grooves often sound very aggressive. To hear this kind of groove, listen to Track 44 on the accompanying CD. You can hear the grooves from Figures 8-10 through 8-13 all on the same track. Check out how they evolve as you add notes from the chord and mode.

The groove in Figure 8-11 adds the ♭3 and 5 to the root, giving it a minor tonality. Minor is the most common chord choice in hard rock, but you may occasionally encounter major tonalities as well. Start this groove with your index finger on the root.



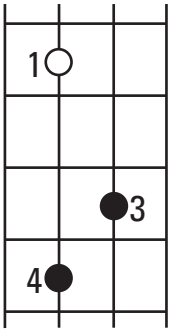
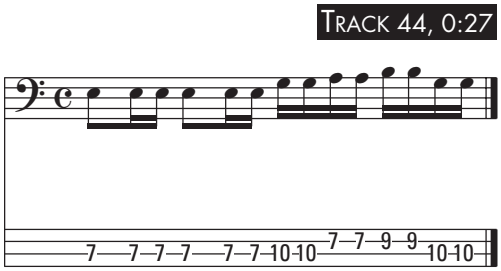


Figure 8-11: Hard rock groove using a minor chord.

Figure 8-12 shows a bass groove that includes notes from both the minor chord and the minor modes. You can really feel your fingers move when you play this groove. Make sure you start with your index finger on the root.



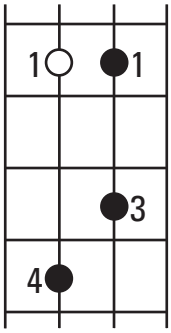
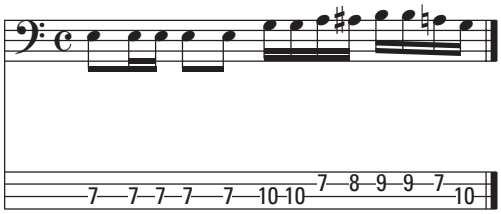


Figure 8-12: Hard rock groove using notes from the minor chord and mode.

The hard rock groove in Figure 8-13 uses a *chromatic tone* (a note outside the regular minor mode) to embellish the bass line. This example shows a typical box groove (no shifts with the left hand) that's played on the bass and guitar in unison (not by the same person, of course).

TRACK 44, 0:40



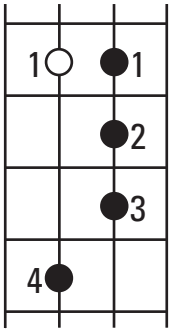


Figure 8-13: Hard rock box groove in a minor tonality.

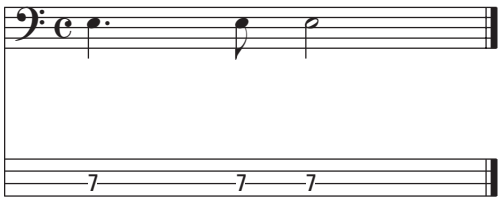
Pop Rock: Supporting the Vocals

The term *pop* is short for popular music, which refers to a style of rock that's popular with a wide range of the general population. Yes, I know that definition leaves the genre wide open, but I'm sure you know what I'm talking about.

For instance, have you ever heard of a band called The Beatles (with Paul McCartney on bass)? How about Elton John? (Several bassists play with Sir Elton, but the great Pino Palladino stands out.) In pop music, the song tells a story, so you don't want to overshadow the vocals with an outrageous bass line.

Figure 8-14 shows the quintessential singer-songwriter groove (using only the root) that you so often hear in pop. The beat is divided equally and is often set up (approached) by an eighth note. The eighth note and the quarter note are the most frequent note choices for pop bass lines.

TRACK 45, 0:00



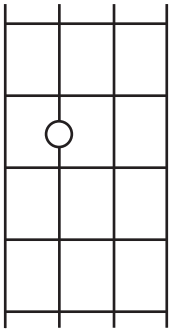


Figure 8-14: Pop rock groove using only the root.

ON THE CD

On Track 45 you can hear the sound of the pop grooves corresponding to Figures 8-14 through 8-17. Check out how the line starts out simply and then gets more and more complex as you add more notes.

Figure 8-15 shows a pop rock groove that uses a major tonality. When playing this groove, you add the 3 and 5 to fill out the chord (major). Make sure you start this groove with your middle finger on the root.

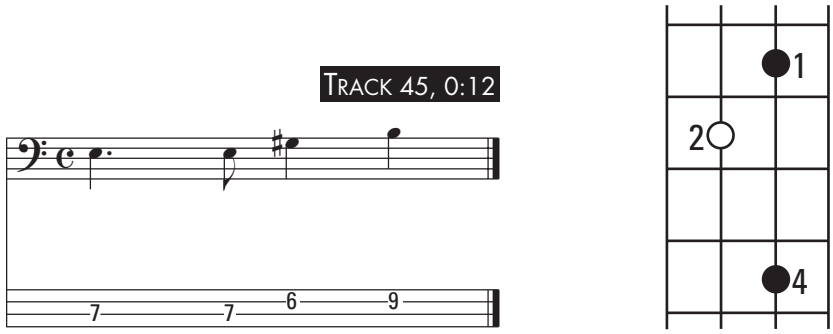


Figure 8-15: Pop rock groove using a major tonality.

Figure 8-16 shows a pop rock groove that uses notes in the dominant tonality. The first half of the measure sets up the feel for this groove. The last half of the measure is much busier; it sets up the calm first half of the next repetition of the groove. The groove builds up tension and then releases to a satisfying resolution. (You can read about tension and release in Chapter 5.) You use notes from the major mode for this groove. Start with your middle finger on the root to keep your left hand in position.

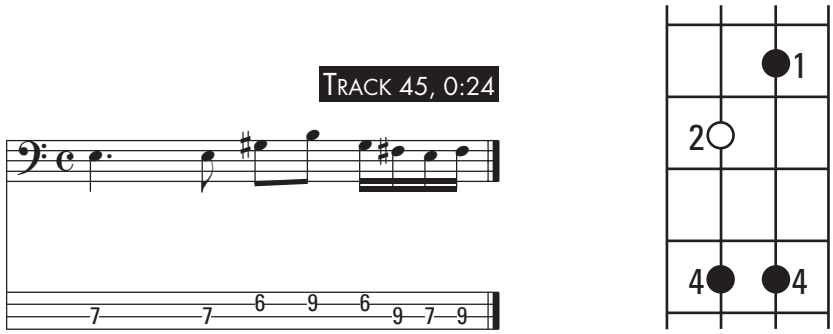
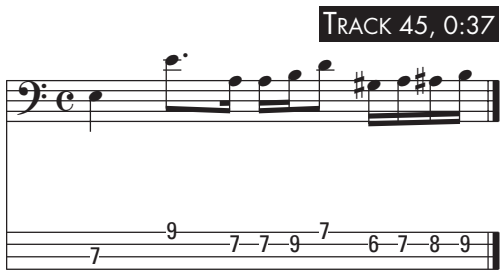


Figure 8-16: Pop rock groove using notes in the dominant tonality.

Figure 8-17 shows a box groove (no shifts) that uses the dominant chord, the mode (which is Mixolydian in this case), and a chromatic tone outside the mode. Remember to start the groove with your middle finger on the root. Listen to the solid establishment of the groove in Figure 8-17 in the first half of the measure and the embellishment in the second half of the measure.



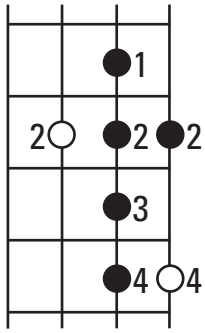


Figure 8-17: Pop rock box groove in dominant tonality.

Blues Rock: Feeling a Bit More Organized

The bass lines in blues rock are very distinctive and repetitive. They form a little countermelody to accompany the real melody. When thinking of great blues rock bassists, the Allman Brothers' late bassist Berry Oakley comes to mind. Donald "Duck" Dunn, who played with the Blues Brothers and Booker T. & the MGs, also is a great example of a blues rock bassist.

REMEMBER

In a blues style, the chords move in a specific sequence called the *blues progression* (a progression is a sequence of chords in a song). The official term for the blues progression is the *I-IV-V progression* (1-4-5 progression). The chords are either all dominant or all minor tonalities, except for the two measures of V, which almost always are dominant. Figuring out a blues progression is pretty straightforward. Here's what you do:

1. **Determine the root of your tune's starting chord (C, for example).**

   This chord is your I chord (or 1 chord).

2. **Using the scale of the I chord (C in this case), find the 4 and 5 (F and G — the 4 and 5 of the C-dominant or C-minor scale).**

   For a blues progression in C, F will be the root of the IV chord, and G will be the root for the V chord.

You now have the roots for your I-IV-V progression. The sequence used in the vast (and I mean *vast*) majority of blues tunes is

- 4 measures of I (C in the example from the previous list)
- 2 measures of IV (F)
- 2 measures of I (C)
- 2 measures of V (G)
- 2 measures of I (C)

You repeat this chord sequence throughout the song.

Because blues songs almost always move harmonically in a certain sequence, your groove needs to be easily moveable as well. Use notes that are easy to reach — within three strings and four frets.

Figure 8-18 shows a blues rock groove that uses only the root. Start the groove with either your middle finger or your ring finger on the root. The beat, as with all the rock styles, is evenly divided.

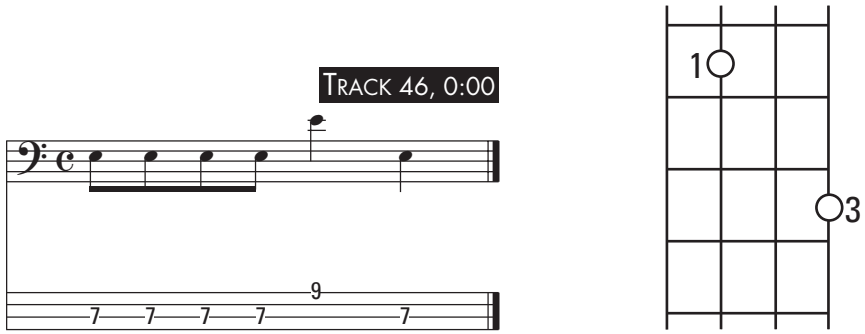
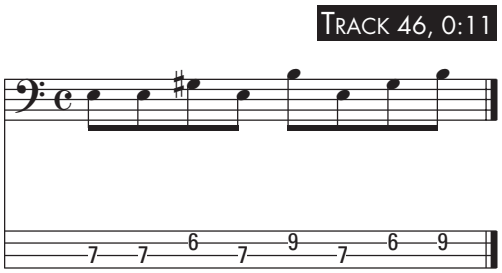


Figure 8-18: Blues rock groove using only the root.

The grooves in Figures 8-18 through 8-21, which you can hear on Track 46 of the CD, use the octave for variety. As you add notes from the chord, mode, and box, the grooves get more and more dense . . . and interesting.

Figure 8-19 shows a groove that adds the 3 and 5 to spell out the chord (a major chord). You start the groove with your middle finger on the root so you don't have to make any shifts with your left hand. The groove uses only two strings, making it easy to move from chord to chord.



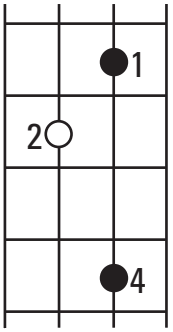
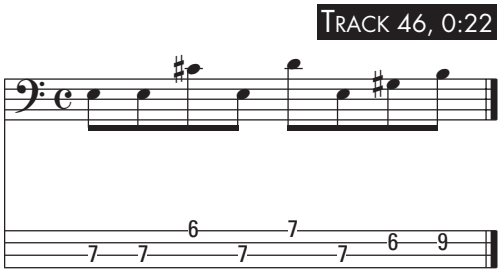


Figure 8-19: Blues rock groove using notes from the chord.

The groove in Figure 8-20 adds notes from the mode (Mixolydian in this case) to the 3 and 5 to really flesh out the dominant tonality. (Check out Chapter 5 for an explanation of modes, chords, and tonalities.) Start this groove with your middle finger on the root.



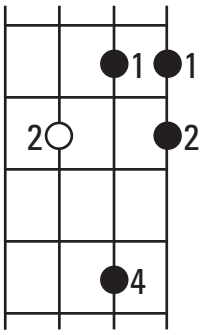


Figure 8-20: Blues rock groove using notes from the chord and mode.

The groove in Figure 8-21 adds some chromatic tones to the scale tones and chord tones, making this groove particularly dense. You can play this groove in one position (which makes it a box groove). Start it with your middle finger on the root, and make sure you don't shift your left hand. In this particular case, you also may start with your index finger, because the groove uses only three frets.

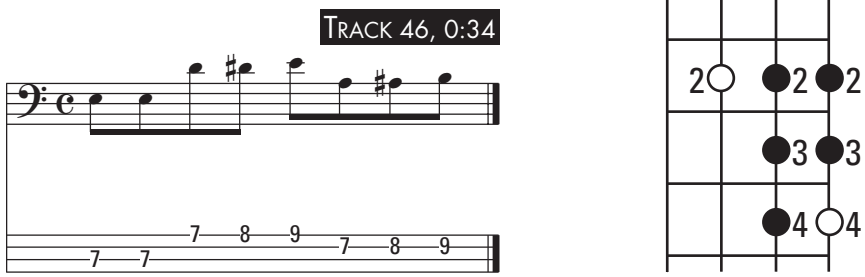


Figure 8-21: Blues rock box groove.

Country Rock: Where Vocals Are King, and You Take a Back Seat

Like pop songs, country tunes tell a story — and the story needs to be heard (just think of Garth Brooks or Kenny Rogers). This means that you, as the bassist, take a back seat in country rock. (Don't worry. You get to shine in funk; see Chapter 10.) In the bass groove for country rock, the root and the 5 dominate.

Figure 8-22 shows a root-based groove for country rock. Even though it's a simple groove, it's one of the most popular grooves used in country music.

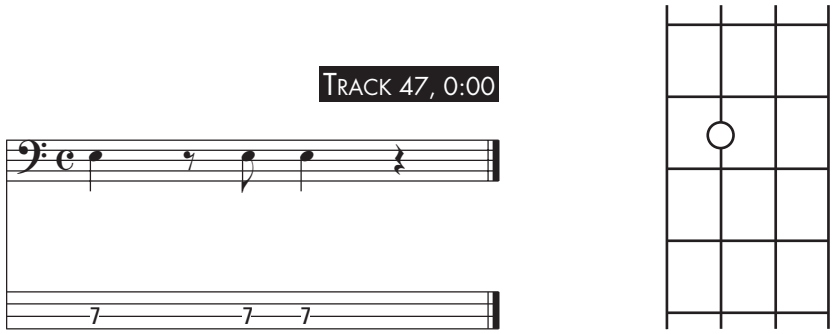


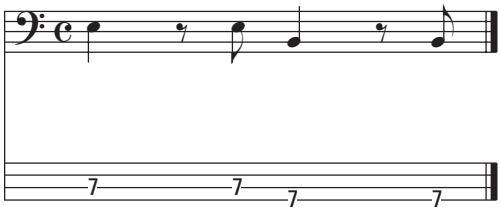
Figure 8-22: Country rock groove using only the root.

ON THE CD

On Track 47 you can listen to the simplicity of the bass grooves shown in Figures 8-22 through 8-25. Pay attention to how they lock in solidly with the drums, especially the bass drum. Notice how the grooves remain unobtrusive despite added notes. You don't want anything to distract from the melody and lyrics of the song.

The country rock groove in Figure 8-23 uses the root and the 5. I leave the 3 out of this example, because the 3 isn't used that often in country rock. You can play this groove over both major and minor chords. The 3 differentiates the major from the minor, so, without the 3, the groove works over both chords.

TRACK 47, 0:12



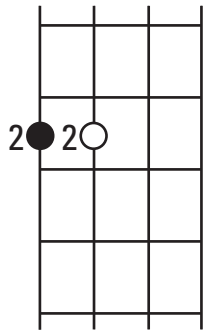


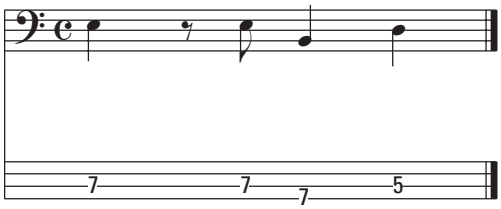
Figure 8-23: Country rock groove using notes from the chord.

TIP

Notice that the 5 is played below the root in the groove shown in Figure 8-23. The 5 also can be played above the root.

Figure 8-24 shows a country rock bass groove that uses the mode (the root and 5, plus one other note from the mode). In most country rock songs, you have to keep the bass line simple. Start the groove in Figure 8-24 with your pinkie on the root; your ring finger works, too.

TRACK 47, 0:26



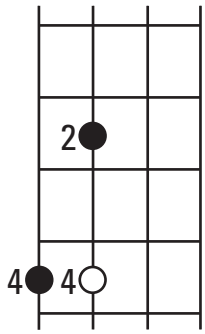


Figure 8-24: Country rock groove using the mode.

The box groove in Figure 8-25 uses a chromatic tone outside the mode. This bass groove is simple and locked in with the drums. Grab your 10-gallon hat and play 'til the cows come home . . . and make sure your left hand is in position by starting with your pinkie on the root (though, you also can use your ring finger).

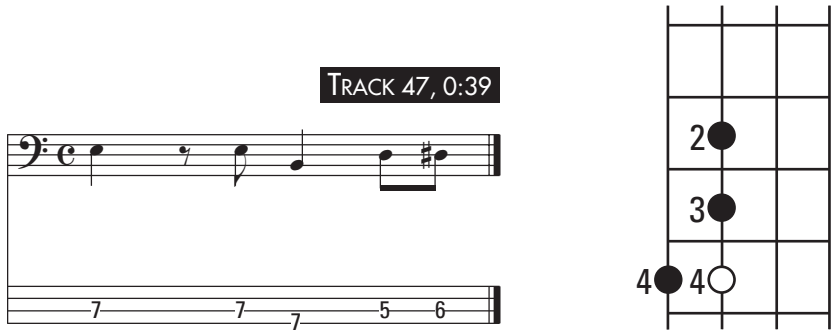


Figure 8-25: Country rock box groove.

One Rock Fits All: Applying a Standard Rock Groove to Any Rock Song

What do you do when you're on the spot to play some of that great rock 'n roll music? Wouldn't it be nice to have one standard groove you can pull out of your hat — or rather amp — that properly sums up the rock genre and is ambiguous enough to fit over just about any chord? Well, you're in luck. Here it is!

ON THE CD

The groove in Figure 8-26 is just what you're looking for. It's a generic, yet hip rock pattern that lets you move around the fingerboard with ease and speed. You can apply the groove in Figure 8-26 to the song on Track 48.

TIP

If you're asked to perform a rock song, and you're stumped with deciding what to play, this groove is a great starting point. You always can tweak your part later, after you're more familiar with the song, but this pattern usually does the trick and keeps you in the game.

TRACK 48

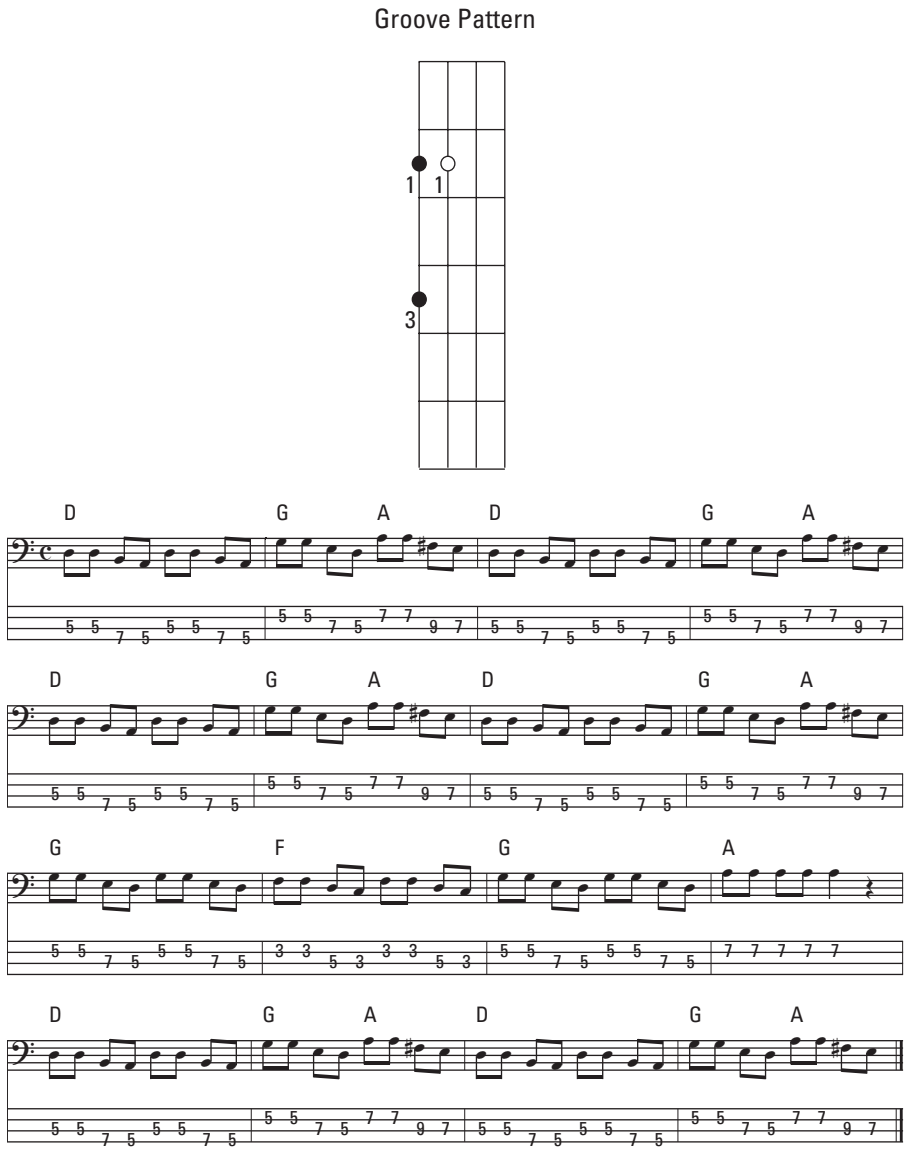


Figure 8-26: Generic rock groove and song.

The song in Figure 8-26 is a standard rock *chord progression* (a sequence of chords in a song). You're certain to encounter it — and similar ones — many times during the course of your bass-playing career.

Chapter 9

Swing It! Playing Styles That Rely on the Triplet Feel

In This Chapter

- Swinging in swing style
- Working the jazz walking bass line
- Shuffling through blues style
- Playing a funk shuffle

Tri-pe-let, *tri*-pe-let, *tri*-pe-let . . . snap your fingers while you say it out loud, accenting the italicized syllables. Now take a wild guess at what kind of feel (rhythm) this chapter is about. That's right, it's the *triplet feel,* and all the styles that I feature in this chapter are based on it. The triplet styles come in two flavors: swing and shuffle.

In music that has a triplet feel, each beat of a four-beat measure is broken into three equal parts. Instead of counting "1, 2, 3, 4," you count "1-trip-let, 2-trip-let, 3-trip-let, 4-trip-let." You hear four triplets in each measure, or 12 hits (occurrences) total.

TIP

You can move all the grooves in this chapter from chord to chord (check out Chapter 6 for more on moving grooves from chord to chord); just practice taking a groove pattern from any grid and moving it to different roots. Consistent fingering is the key to success for moving these grooves smoothly.

Swing: Grooving Up-Tempo with Attitude

The *swing style* originated in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The music of Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman typifies the early swing era. Bands like The Brian Setzer Orchestra bring swing to today's music scene. In swing

style, the first note of the two eighth notes in a beat is *slightly* longer than the second — long, short, long, short — and it gives the feeling of . . . swinging, of course.

The bass line in swing style is predictable but cool (it makes you want to snap your fingers). The vast majority of swing tunes are based on a major or a dominant tonality. (I cover tonality in Chapter 5.)

Figure 9-1 shows you a groove in a major tonality, using a major pentatonic scale. (See Chapter 7 for an explanation of pentatonic scales.) Start this groove with your middle finger to avoid any shifting of your left hand.

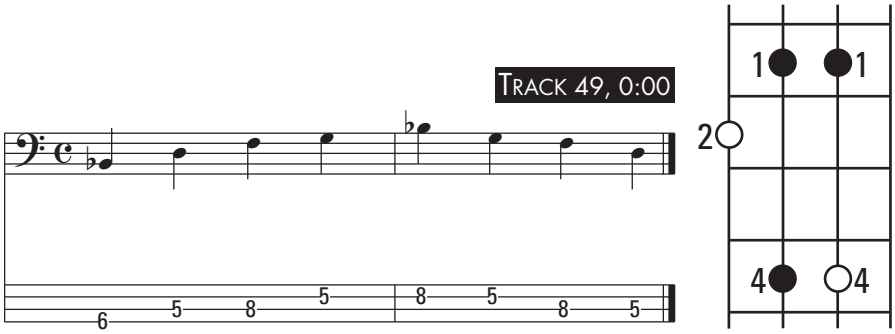


Figure 9-1: Swing groove using a major pentatonic scale.

ON THE CD

As you listen to the groove from Figure 9-1 on Track 49, notice how the notes of the bass line are played on the beat and how the drums subdivide each of those beats into — that's right — triplets.

Figure 9-2 shows an example of a swing groove using a mode — in this case, the common Mixolydian mode. (Check out Chapter 5 for information about modes.)

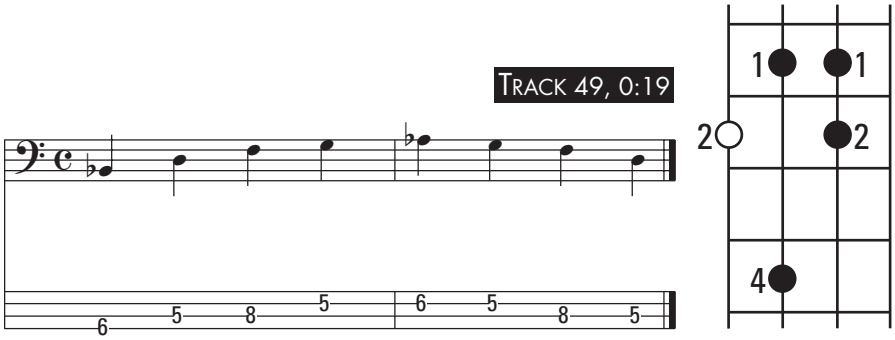


Figure 9-2: Swing groove using a Mixolydian mode.

Again, as you're listening to the groove from Figure 9-2, notice how your bass line is concentrated on the beats, whereas the drums subdivide the beat into triplets. You can hear this groove on Track 49.

Jazz: Going for a Walk

A *walking bass line* simply walks through the appropriate scale of each chord, one note per beat, hitting every beat of each measure. The walking bass line in the jazz style is a more creative form of bass playing than the other swing styles because you choose new notes each time you play the same song. The walking bass line was developed by upright bassists, such as Ray Brown, Milt Hinton, Paul Chambers, and Ron Carter, but now it's also commonly played on the bass guitar.

Creating a walking bass line is one of the more elusive art forms in the bass world, but this section takes you through it step by step (pun intended) so it doesn't seem so frightening. The formula for a successful walking bass line is simple:

1. **Beat One: Determine the chord tonality (major, minor, dominant, or half-diminished), and play the root of that chord.**

   See Chapter 5 for more about chord tonalities.

2. **Beat Two: Play any chord tone of the chord, or any note in the scale related to that chord.**

   If you're not sure which scale belongs to which chord, check out Chapter 5.

3. **Beat Three: Play any chord tone or scale tone of the chord.**

   Yep — same as Step 2, but try to pick a different note.

4. **Beat Four: Play a leading tone to the next root.**

   A *leading tone* leads from one chord to the next. The sound of the leading tone isn't related to the current chord; it's related to the chord you're approaching. In other words, the leading tone prepares the listener's ear for the sound of the new chord. The most important point to understand about a leading tone is that it aims for the *following* chord's root. For example, if you're going from a C chord to an F chord, your leading tone leads to *F* (never mind the C).

   Leading tones come in three types:

   - Chromatic (half-step)
   - Diatonic (scale)
   - Dominant (the 5 of the new chord)

   Figure 9-3 shows the location of each type of leading tone. The root of the new chord is represented by the open circle; the leading tones are

represented by the solid dots. The arrows show which way the leading tone moves to resolve to the root of the new chord.

In a walking bass line, beat four of the measure is reserved for the leading tone.

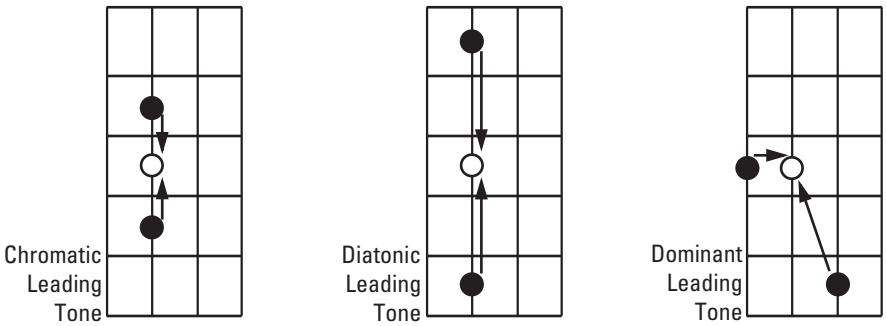


Figure 9-3: The locations of the chromatic, diatonic, and dominant leading tones.

Working the walk

Creating walking bass lines can be overwhelming at first. That's because they don't seem to follow any predictable template the way regular grooves do (check out Chapter 6 for more on creating grooves). However, when you break down walking into three main concepts, the whole thing becomes clear. Here are the three main concepts for walking bass lines:

- Walking with root, 5, and leading tone
- Walking with chord tones and leading tone
- Walking with scale tones and leading tone

All three main walking concepts have one element in common: the all-important leading tone, the note that leads you — and your band — to the next chord. The leading tone is what makes or breaks your walking line. Be sure you're absolutely familiar with each of the three leading tone types in Figure 9-3.

Figure 9-4 shows a typical jazz *progression* (sequence of chords) that includes the main chord types: major, minor, dominant, and half-diminished.

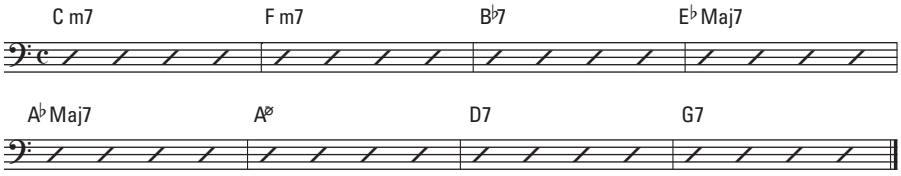


Figure 9-4: Jazz progression for walking bass.

The root-5 concept

Figure 9-5 is an example of a walking bass line that uses only the root of a chord, including the octave, the 5, and the all-important leading tone that comes on the last beat of each measure (octaves and measures are explained in Chapters 5 and 3, respectively).

The most important asset of this method is that you can use the same structure on all the major, minor, and dominant chords in a song. You can move the pattern as a *constant structure* from chord to chord with ease (see Chapter 6 for information on the constant structure). Only the half-diminished chord requires a slight alteration in the pattern — you lower the 5 by a half step (or one fret), making it a *diminished* 5, which is the defining note for a half-diminished (or any type of diminished) chord.

TRACK 50

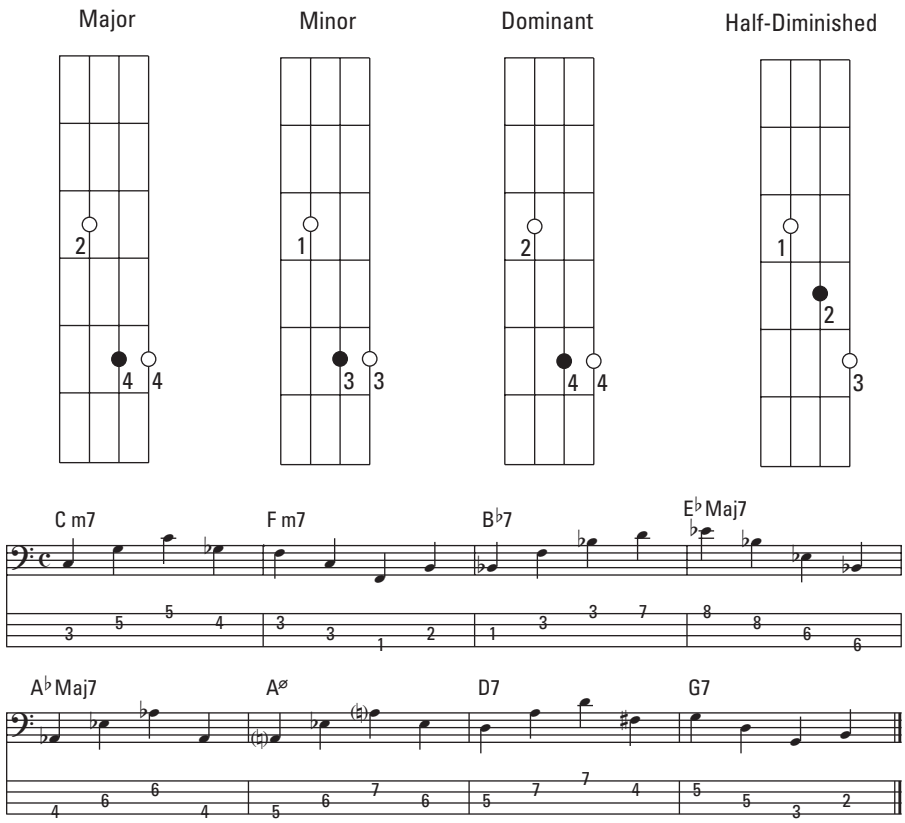


Figure 9-5: Walking bass using root and 5 plus leading tone.

Listen to Track 50 for guidance on how to play the root-5 concept in a song, and check out Chapter 5 for any help you may need with the chord types. After you're comfortable playing the line in Figure 9-5, note for note, pan out the bass and come up with your own line.

The chord-tone concept

You can bump your bass line to a new level of sophistication with the chord-tone concept. Try playing the etude in Figure 9-6. (*Etude* is a fancy name for "exercise," as in musical exercise.) In this case you're using the *chord tones* of each chord, both ascending and descending, plus the crucial leading tone to walk your way from chord to chord through the harmony.

To start, get your fretting hand into the proper position for each chord. Just follow the grid pattern in Figure 9-6 so you can cover all the appropriate notes for each chord without shifting. In other words, shift your hand into position at the beginning of each new chord, and then stay there until you have to shift into position for the next chord.

Play the entire example in Figure 9-6, note for note, and get used to the sound of a well-constructed walking bass line by listening to Track 51. After you're comfortable with it, pan the bass out of the recording and come up with your own bass part using the concept of chord tones plus leading tones.

The scale-tone concept

The smoothest and most *linear* (moving step by step in a scale) walking concept is the one that uses scale tones; you can find an example in Figure 9-7. Play the first three notes of the appropriate scale for each chord, either ascending or descending, and add the leading tone on the last beat of each measure to get smoothly to the next chord (for a thorough explanation of the chord-scale relationships, check out Chapter 5).

You may want to practice your scales a bit before diving into the etude in Figure 9-7, especially your descending scales. Once you're ready, play the bass part, note for note, with the recording. Eventually you can get rid of the recorded bass by panning to one side, and then you can come up with your own bass line of scale tones plus a leading tone. Ah, and just in case I forgot to mention it, leading tones are crucial to a great walking bass line.

TRACK 51

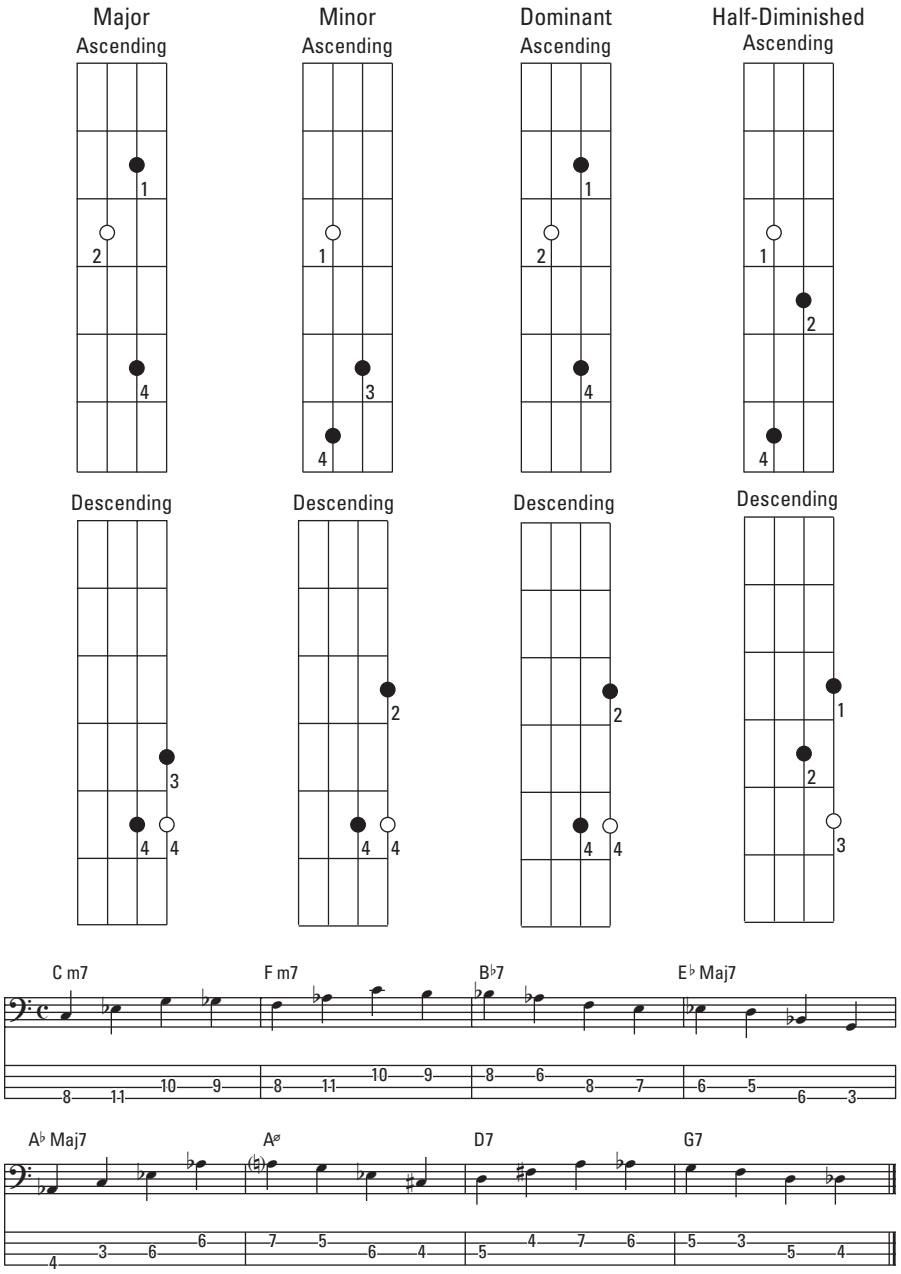


Figure 9-6: Walking bass using chord tones plus leading tone.

TRACK 52

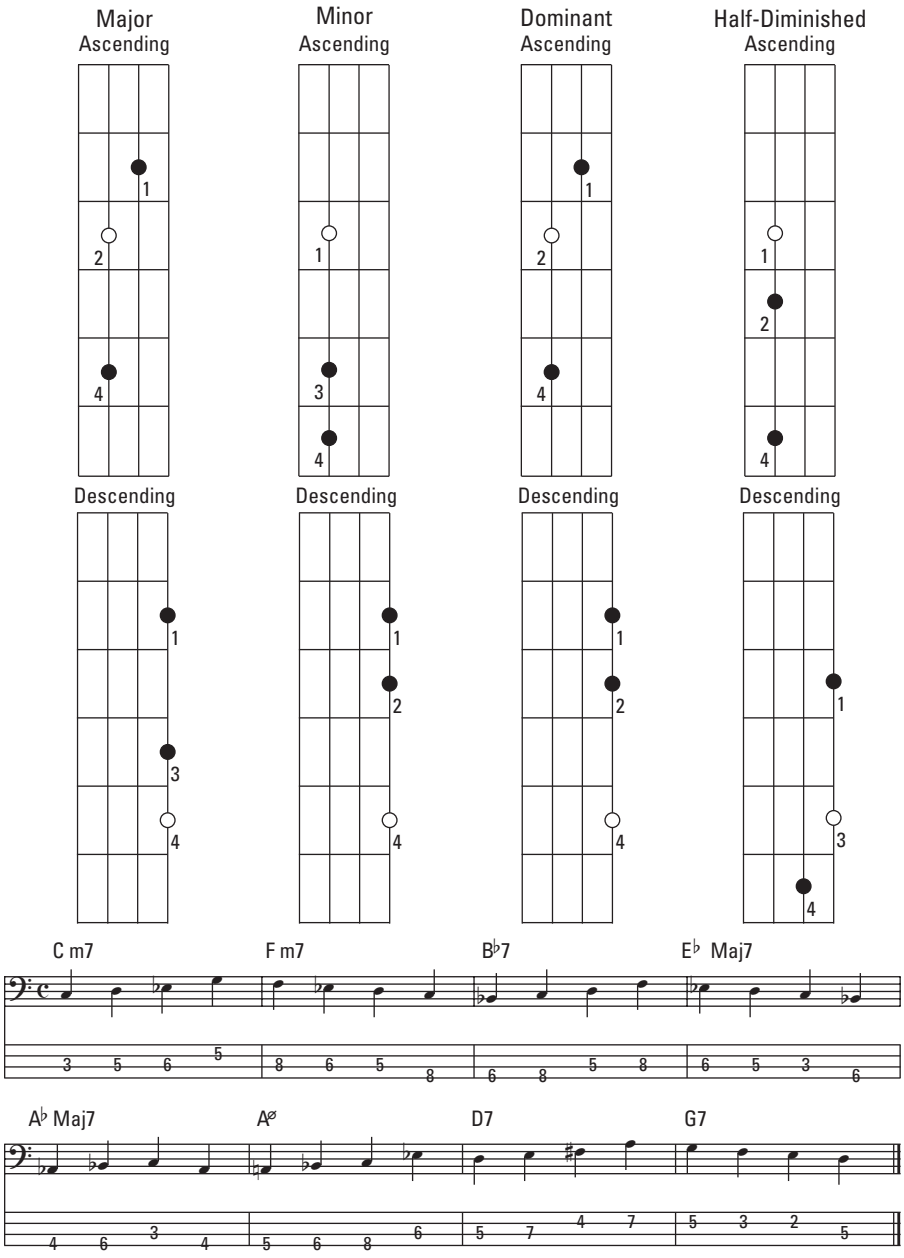


Figure 9-7: Walking bass using scale tones plus leading tone.

ON THE CD

You can hear how easily this walking line moves from chord to chord by listening to Track 52 on the accompanying CD. Pay very close attention to the use of the leading tone at the end of each measure; it's what makes a walking line move smoothly to the next chord.

Which of the walking concepts in Figures 9-5, 9-6, and 9-7 is right for you? Well, actually, all of them are great. If you have a good handle on all three concepts, you can switch among them while you're playing your bass part in a song. You'll sound cool, off-the-cuff, and unpredictable. And why not? Walking should be fun to play and interesting to listen to.

Applying a jazz blues walking pattern

You can walk through almost any jazz tune. To demonstrate the jazz walking style properly, I show you how to walk in a *jazz blues progression* (see Figure 9-8). In the figure, the chords are printed above each grid. The modes for each chord are clearly marked: Each open circle represents the root that begins the sequence, and the leading tone is the last note in each sequence (follow the arrows). You can start this progression on any root. Figure 9-8 is written in B♭, but if someone asks for jazz blues in C, just move the whole pattern up two frets (toward the bridge of the bass) and start your first note on C.

TIP

By the way, playing this pattern is easy (despite the complex sound) because you don't have to shift your left hand. Just make sure you start the pattern with your middle finger.

TRACK 53

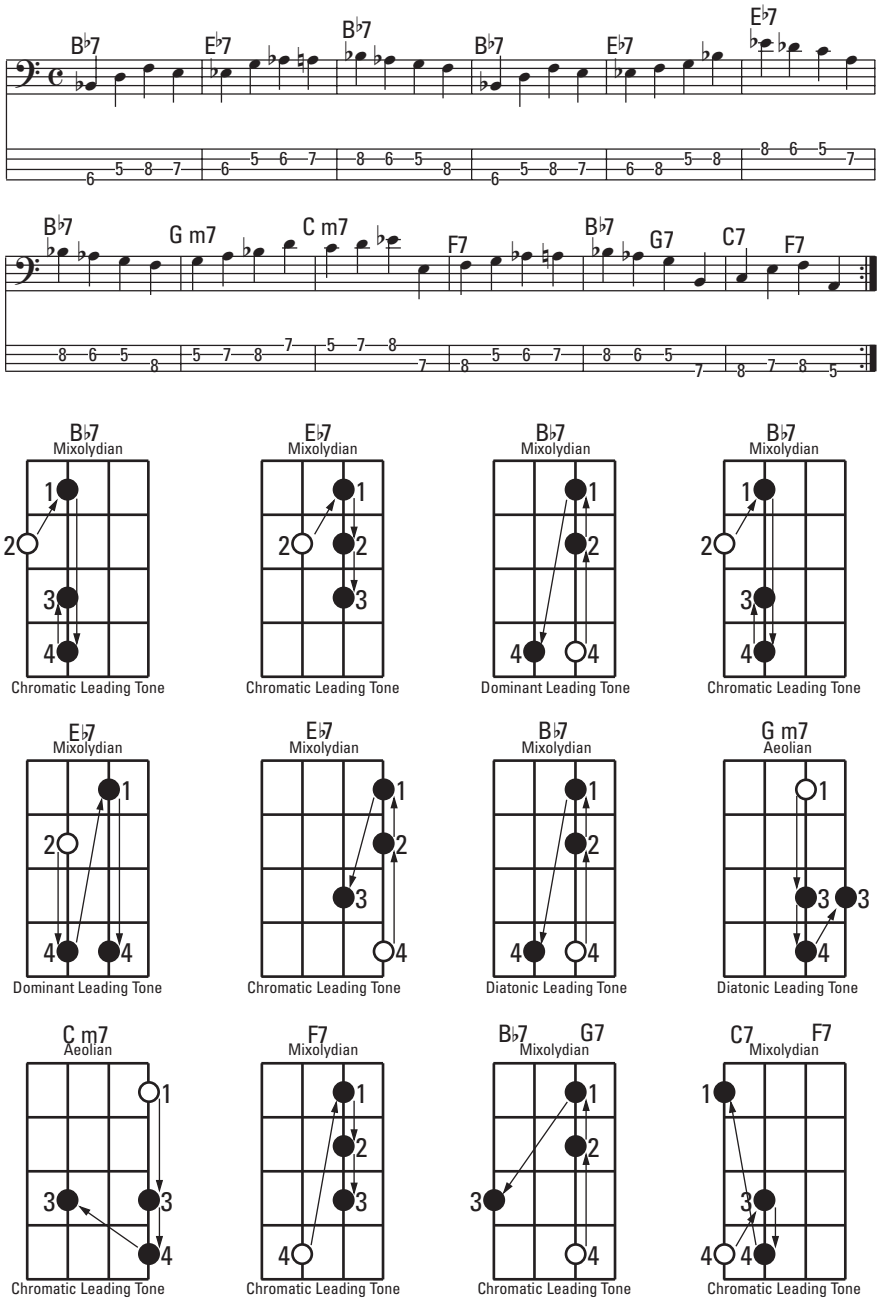


Figure 9-8: Jazz blues walking pattern.

ON THE CD

Notice how every kind of leading tone is used as you listen to Track 53. The bass part is so intricate that you can even repeat it several times without changing a single note and nobody would complain (or even notice).

Take your time when starting to play a new tune; you need to figure out the scales for each chord before you play it. The more you play, the faster you get.

Blues Shuffle: Taking an Organized Walk

The *blues shuffle* is one of the most recognizable triplet feels in music. The bass line is an organized walk — it's a walking bass line that's repeated throughout the tune. When you play the blues shuffle, you may feel like you're playing a lopsided rhythm. The first note is long, the second note is short, the third note is long, and so on.

Tommy Shannon (bassist for Stevie Ray Vaughan), Roscoe Beck (bassist for Robben Ford), and the incomparable Donald "Duck" Dunn (of the Blues Brothers and Booker T. & the MGs) are three wonderful blues bassists who are very skilled at playing the blues shuffle.

Figure 9-9 demonstrates a blues shuffle groove that uses only one note — the root. You can use this groove for any chord.

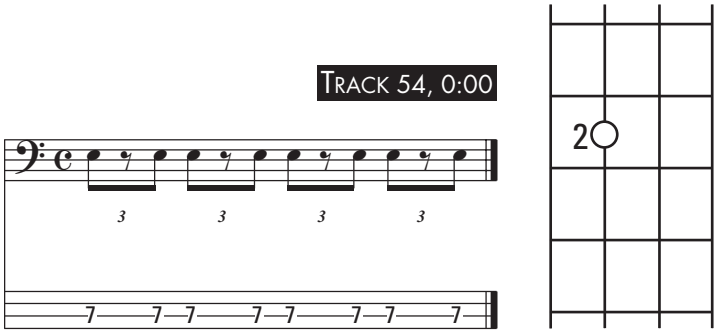


Figure 9-9: Blues shuffle groove using only the root.

Figure 9-10 shows another example of a blues shuffle groove. The 3 and 5 are added to this groove to form a major chord. Start the groove with your middle finger.

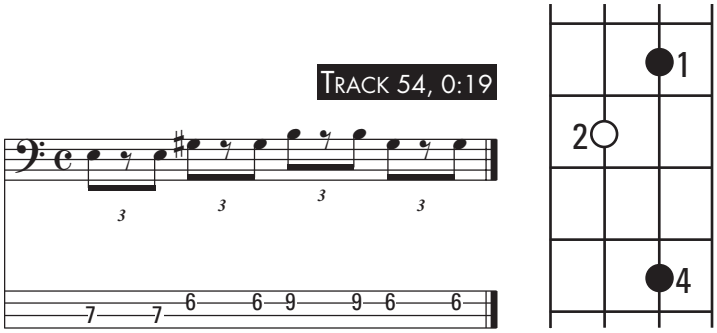


Figure 9-10: Blues shuffle groove using a major chord.

In Figure 9-11, notes from the Mixolydian mode (see Chapter 5 for more about modes) are added to the root, 3, and 5, filling out the chord to form a dominant tonality. Start this groove with your middle finger on the root.

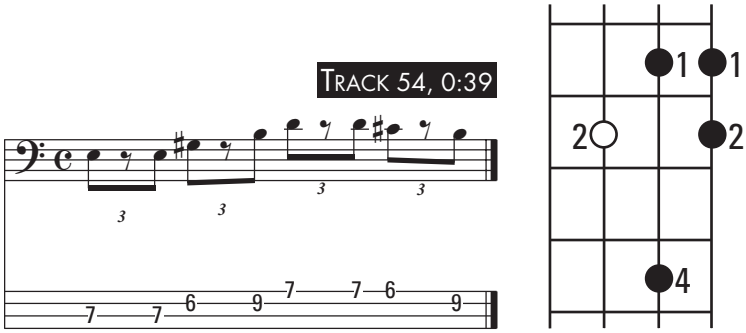


Figure 9-11: Blues shuffle groove using a Mixolydian mode.

But what if the blues tune you're playing is on the sad side, in a minor tonality? (After all, sad tunes *are* a strong possibility when you're playing the blues.) If you want to play the groove in Figure 9-11 over a minor tonality, you need to make a minor adjustment: Simply change the tonality by flattening the 3 (making it a ♭3). Figure 9-12 shows a blues shuffle that includes notes from the minor mode (Aeolian or Dorian mode).

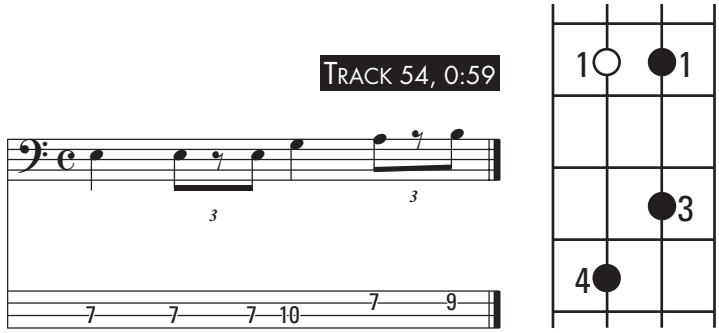


Figure 9-12: Blues shuffle groove using a minor mode.

The blues shuffle groove in Figure 9-13 is more complex. It includes not only notes from the chord and its related modes (in this case, Mixolydian for the dominant chord) but *chromatic tones* (notes moving in half steps) as well. (See Chapter 5 for more on chromatic tones.)

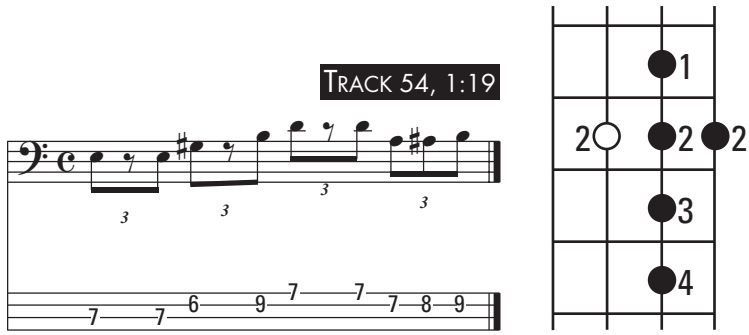


Figure 9-13: Blues shuffle groove using a Mixolydian mode with a chromatic tone.

Finally, Figure 9-14 shows a complex blues shuffle that you play over a minor tonality using a chromatic tone.

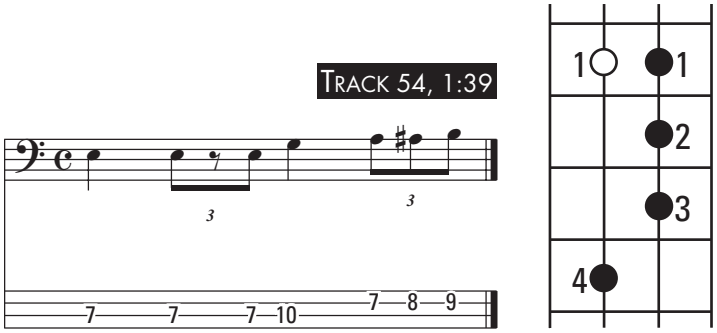


Figure 9-14: Blues shuffle groove using a minor tonality with a chromatic tone.

ON THE CD

Figures 9-9 through 9-14 show different variations on the shuffle groove patterns. You can hear them all on Track 54. Listen for the lopsided feel of the shuffle in each of the grooves — the long-short-long-short rhythm of the notes. While you're at it, also notice the differences in tonalities and how some sound busier than others.

The grooves in Figures 9-13 and 9-14 use a strong *triplet figure* (three notes in a beat) on the last beat of the measure. This triplet figure helps establish the strong triplet feel for this style. Play around with these grooves and come up with some of your own. By the way, these grooves work great over a blues progression. (See Chapter 8 for the structure of the blues progression.)

Funk Shuffle: Combining Funk, Blues, and Jazz

Funk shuffle (also called *shuffle funk*) is a hybrid groove style, which means that it combines several elements of other styles — funk, blues, and jazz. When funk, which normally uses straight sixteenth notes, is combined with blues and jazz, which use triplets, the resulting combination is a lopsided sixteenth-note groove (a combination of long and short notes) — a very cool combination. This type of groove is pretty challenging, but some useful tricks of the trade can help make it a lot easier to play.

Check out Figure 9-15 for an example of a funk shuffle groove. This groove uses only the root (in two octaves) with an added *dead note* (a note that sounds like a thud; see Chapter 5 for a complete explanation). The drums are crucial in this style because they drive the rhythm along in tandem with the bass. You can start this groove with either your index finger or middle finger on the low root (the starting note).

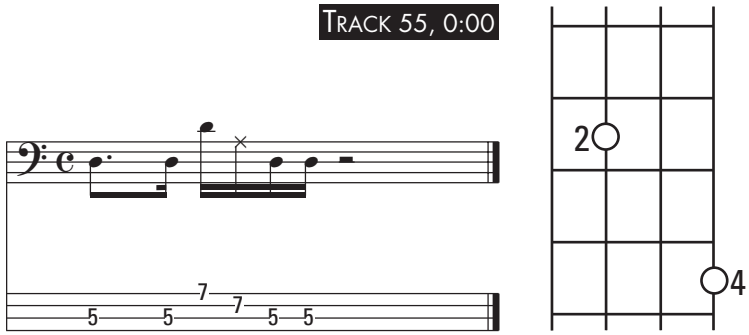


Figure 9-15: Funk shuffle groove using only the root.

Figure 9-16 shows an example of a funk shuffle groove that uses notes common to both the Mixolydian (dominant) and Dorian (minor) modes. "Whoa! You mean the groove in Figure 9-16 fits over both dominant *and* minor?" Yep! In fact, it's an *ambiguous* groove (see Chapter 5 for an explanation of ambiguous grooves). This groove isn't all that easy to master, but after you get comfortable with it, you can get lots (and lots) of use out of playing it over any dominant or minor chord. In the funk shuffle style, almost all chords are dominant or minor.

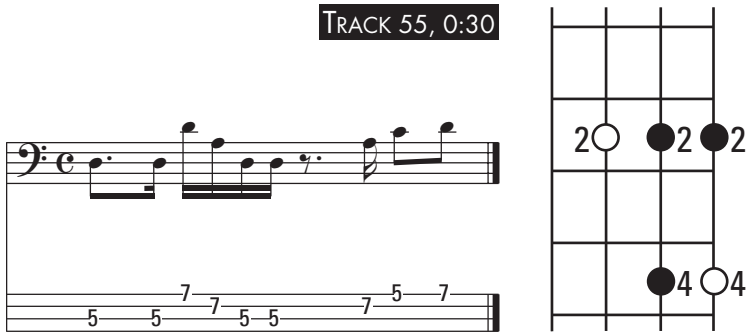


Figure 9-16: Funk shuffle groove for dominant and minor chords.

The funk shuffle in Figure 9-17 includes more notes from both the Mixolydian and Dorian modes; notice the cool syncopation — the way a note anticipates the beat it's expected on. (Chapter 10 covers syncopation.) The groove in Figure 9-17 can be used over most chords in shuffle funk tunes (that's right, it's an ambiguous groove). Most of the chords are either dominant (Mixolydian) or minor (Dorian). Start the groove with your index finger or middle finger to keep it in the box (so you don't have to shift your left hand).

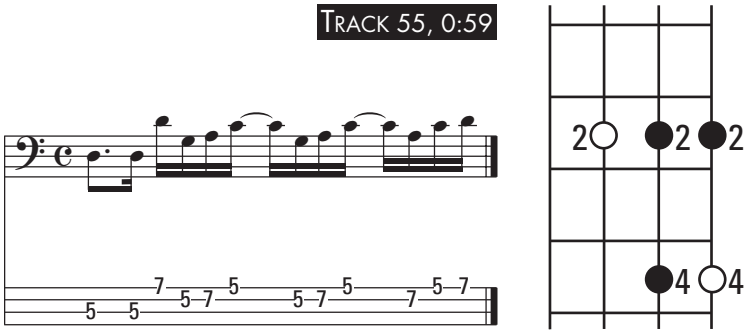


Figure 9-17: Funk shuffle groove using notes from the dominant or minor modes.

ON THE CD

You can hear Figures 9-15 through 9-17 on Track 55. As you listen to the funk shuffle grooves on the CD, your head should be boppin' with the beat. The funk shuffle has a much more . . . well . . . funky sound than the other shuffle styles. You still have the lopsided shuffle feel, but with a lot more attitude.

When you're grooving on a funk shuffle, you can keep going for hours and hours without getting the least bit bored; because of its complexity, a funk shuffle is going to keep you busy. Keep the shuffle funky, "'cause it don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing."

The quintessential generic shuffle/swing song is a good old-fashioned blues, like the one in Figure 9-18. (For more on the structure of a typical blues song, check out Chapter 8.)

ON THE CD

To really get yourself into the proper mood for the blues, get up on a rickety bar stool, pour yourself a blues-approved beverage (mixed drinks, peach-flavored diet iced tea, and sparkling water are *not* blues-approved drinks — black coffee and muddy water *are*), and start playing the blues along with Track 56.

TRACK 56

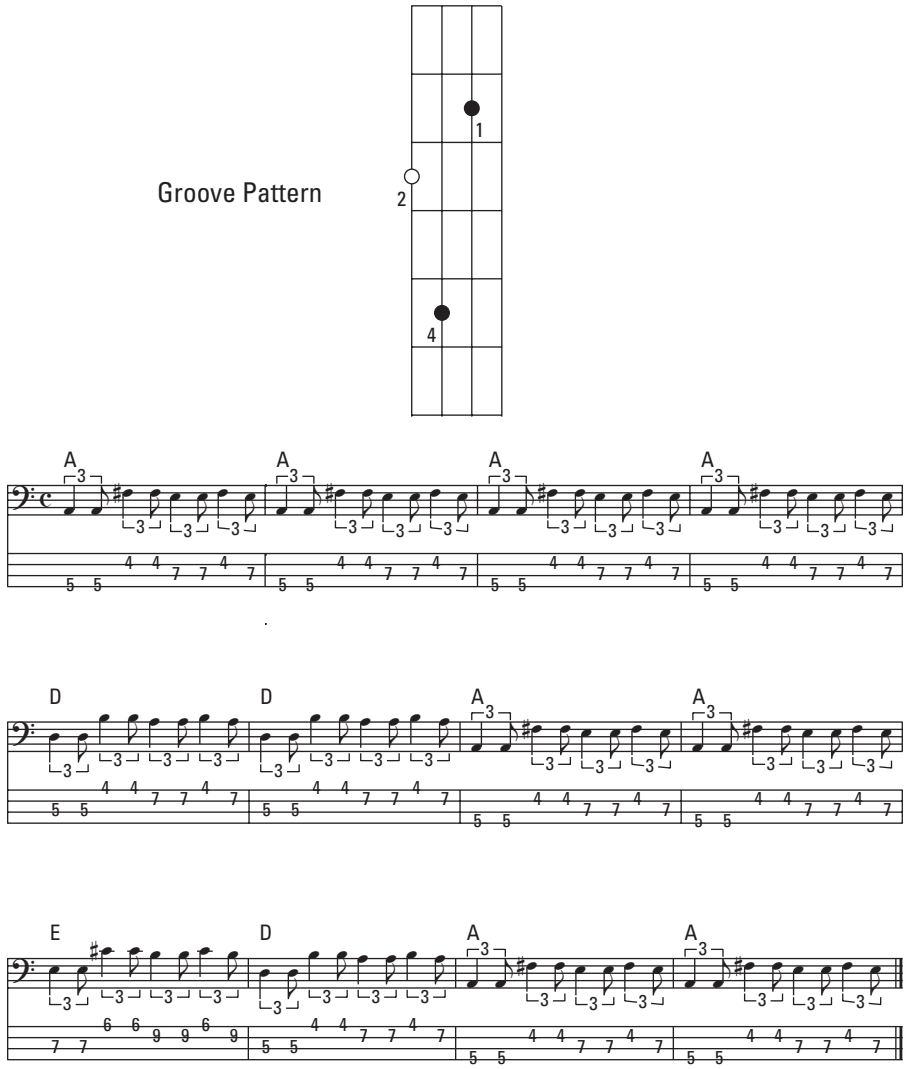


Figure 9-18: Generic shuffle song.

Chapter 10

Making It Funky: Playing Hardcore Bass Grooves

In This Chapter

- Discovering R & B
- Playing Motown
- Creating fusion
- Getting the funk
- Hopping to hip-hop
- Relying on one funky groove

"Gimme the funk! You gotta gimme the funk!" When these words echo across the bandstand, they're directed at *you* (and your alter ego, the drummer). From Motown to hip-hop, the bass player takes a starring role in funk; your skill and dexterity are put to the test. Hardcore bass grooves are a real workout for any bass player. Funk is essentially party music, and your job is to keep every foot in the room moving to the beat.

The sixteenth note is the rhythm of choice in funk. You often play quite a few sixteenth notes in funk grooves. In this chapter, I give you a selection of prime funk grooves that you can use when the words "Gimme the funk!" echo in your direction across the bandstand.

R & B: Movin' to Some Rhythm and Blues

R & B (rhythm and blues) originated in the late 1940s and is often referred to as "R & B/Soul." It's still one of today's most popular styles of music. R & B is dominated by *session players* — musicians who record with numerous artists.

Generally, record producers hire the same rhythm section (session players) to accompany all of their artists. So you have the same bassist, drummer, guitarist, and keyboardist playing together for years and years on countless sessions with different artists.

Tommy Cogbill (who played with such singers as Aretha Franklin and Wilson Pickett) and Chuck Rainey (who played with Aretha Franklin, Quincy Jones, and Steely Dan) are two great session players. Because of this tradition of using session players, you can hear excellent grooves behind some fabulous singers. These musicians are completely at ease with one another after having recorded a multitude of successful songs together over the years.

The bass groove in R & B consists of a fairly active bass line, locked in tight with the drums. Because R & B music often has such a busy bass line — the harmony includes both scale and chord tones — you need a lot of different notes to keep this bass line interesting.

The use of *syncopation* — a tied note that anticipates a beat (for more on ties, check out Chapter 3) — makes the R & B groove funky. You create syncopation by striking a note when it's not expected and then failing to restrike the note where it *is* expected. When playing grooves with syncopation, you anticipate the beat by playing a note sooner than expected. This technique gives the music a kick, like a roller coaster that suddenly drops toward the ground when you least expect it.

Figure 10-1 shows an R & B groove in a major tonality. (If you need help creating grooves for different tonalities — major, minor, and dominant — check out Chapter 6.) Start this groove with your middle finger to avoid shifting your left hand.

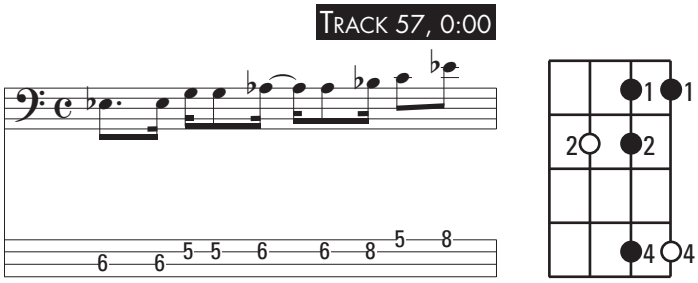


Figure 10-1: R & B groove using a major (Ionian) mode.

The groove in Figure 10-1 uses notes from the major chord and its related Ionian mode for a major tonality. (See Chapter 5 for information about mode and chord compatibility.) You can play this groove as a dominant tonality by playing the ♭7 instead of the 6.

Figure 10-2 shows an R & B groove in a dominant tonality using the Mixolydian mode. Start this groove with your middle finger to avoid shifting.

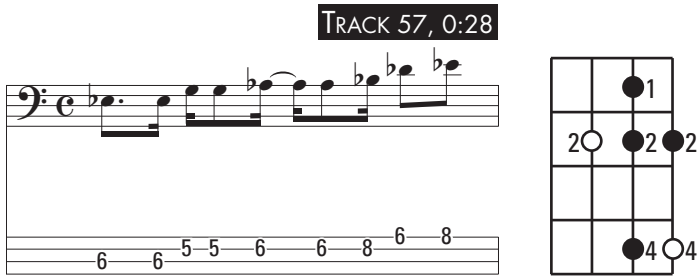


Figure 10-2: R & B groove using a dominant (Mixolydian) mode.

In Figure 10-3, you can see what the groove from Figure 10-1 looks like in a minor tonality. This groove is based on a Dorian or Aeolian mode (either one will do in this case), and it fits perfectly over a minor chord. Start the groove with your index finger.

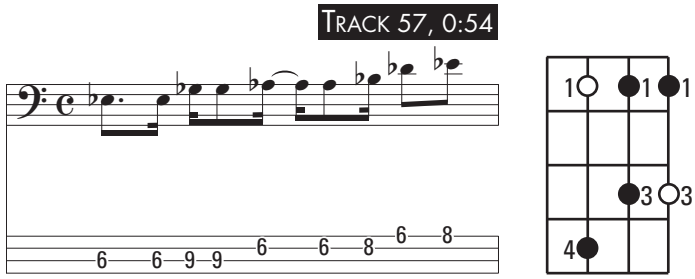


Figure 10-3: R & B groove using a minor (Dorian or Aeolian) mode.

ON THE CD

You have to listen carefully to hear the subtle difference between the grooves shown in Figures 10-1 and 10-2; only one note (the second to last note) is different. Figure 10-3 changes the tonality from dominant to minor by changing one note from Figure 10-2. All three grooves can be heard on Track 57.

Dead notes and chromatic tones are frequently used in all funk styles, including R & B. (See Chapter 5 for an explanation of dead notes and chromatic tones.) Figure 10-4 shows you what the grooves in Figures 10-1, 10-2, and 10-3 look like with dead notes and chromatic tones added. The grooves in Figure 10-4 tend to sound fairly complex.

ON THE CD

Figure 10-4 utilizes dead notes to make the groove sound busier. Listen to Track 57 for the very subtle thud of the dead notes in each groove.

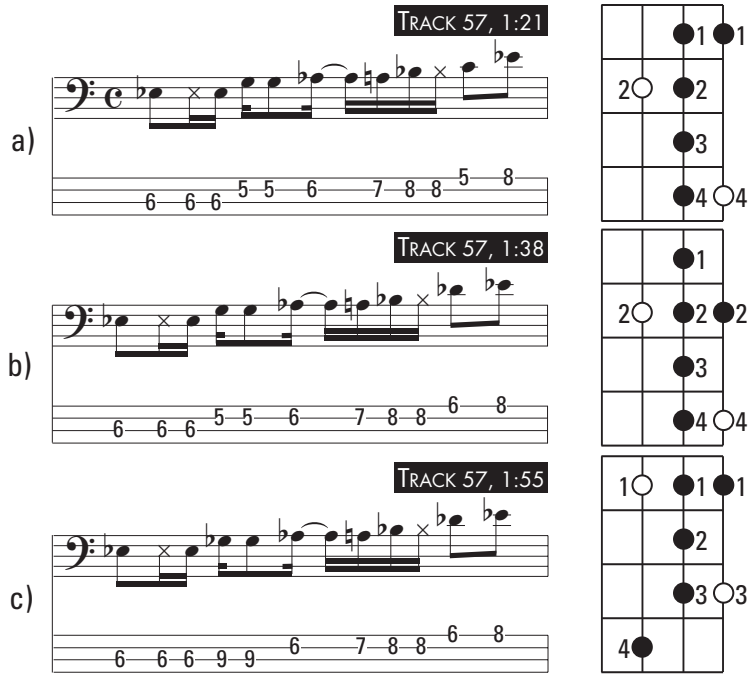


Figure 10-4: R & B grooves in major, dominant, and minor tonalities using dead notes and chromatic tones.

To keep your R & B grooves interesting, you may want to start with simple rhythm and note choices, and then you can add dead notes and chromatic tones as you get deeper into the tune.

The Motown Sound: Grooving with the Music of the Funk Brothers

Motown is the name of a record label that got its start in Detroit in the late 1950s. The Motown style is actually part of the R & B family, which you can read about in the preceding section. Numerous singers recorded for Motown, and the vast majority were fortunate enough to be able to use the Motown house band — the famous Funk Brothers — for their recordings.

James Jamerson (also known as Funk Brother #1) not only defined the label's sound with his active, syncopated lines on hundreds of hits, he also forged the template for modern electric bass playing. Marvin Gaye, The Temptations, Stevie Wonder, and many other artists benefited from the outstanding

groove-creating abilities of Jamerson and the Funk Brothers. Your bass skills also can benefit from the Jamerson/Motown-style grooves featured in this section.

Many of the Motown grooves use *constant structure.* Constant-structure grooves use notes that occur in more than one tonality. (The shared notes are called *common tones;* see Chapter 6 for more about constant-structure grooves.) You can play a groove using constant structure over any chord and still make it sound interesting.

Figure 10-5 shows a typical Motown groove that works over a major or dominant tonality. (This one even works for a minor tonality.) When you play the groove, start it with your pinkie.

TRACK 58, 0:00

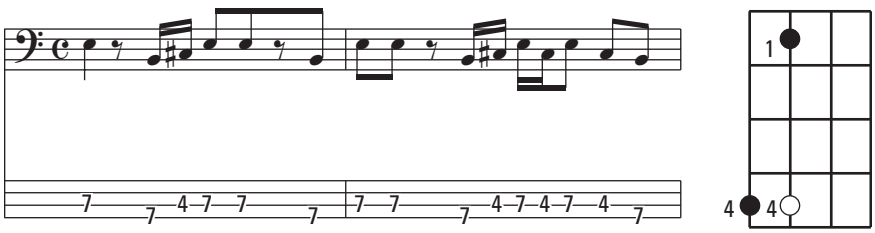


Figure 10-5: Motown groove using constant structure for major and dominant tonalities.

Figure 10-6 shows a busy Motown groove using common tones for dominant and minor tonalities. This groove also sports chromatic tones in the second measure that lead back to the beginning of the groove. Start the groove with your pinkie.

TRACK 58, 0:23

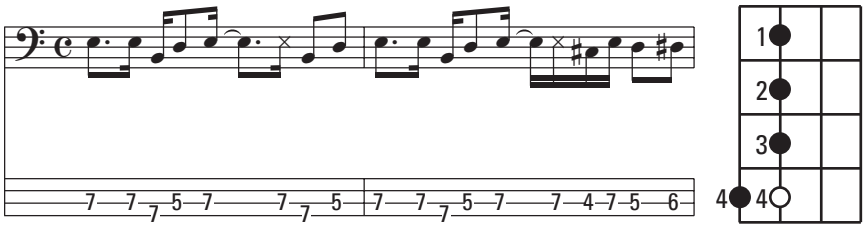


Figure 10-6: Motown groove using constant structure for dominant and minor tonalities.

Notice how the grooves in Figures 10-5 and 10-6 each have a slight variation in the second measure. This variation is a Jamerson trademark. You can hear the variation if you listen to the groove on Track 58.

The Motown bassists were the first generation of bass virtuosos. They influenced more modern bassists than you can shake a string at.

Fusion: Blending Two Styles into One

Fusion is the merging of two or more styles of music. Fusion generally refers to the combination of rock rhythms and jazz harmonies, but any combination of styles is possible. Fusion-style bass playing is intricate and complex and full of nervous energy and fast notes, yet it allows you to rock the joint with deep grooves. In this section, I show you bass grooves that use every trick in the book: scale tones, dead notes, chromatic tones, and plenty of sixteenth notes.

Figure 10-7 shows a busy fusion-style groove that you can play for either a major or dominant chord (Ionian or Mixolydian mode). Notice the use of dead notes and the chromatic tone that make the groove more interesting. Start the groove in Figure 10-7 with your middle finger; no shifts of the left hand are necessary (or desired). The groove is extremely busy, hitting all 16 of the sixteenth notes in the measure.

A brief history of fusion from the bass player's view

With the dawn of fusion in the 1970s, the role of the bassist was pushed to the forefront. Groups such as Return To Forever, with their astonishing bassist Stanley Clarke, and Weather Report, with the incredible bassist Jaco Pastorius, took bass playing to stratospheric heights. Suddenly bassists were expected to play blistering sixteenth-note grooves and perform solos like horn players. This era also saw the emergence of the *fretless bass* (a bass guitar without frets) — thanks to Jaco — as well as basses with more than four strings, such as the great session player Anthony Jackson's six-string contrabass guitar (with the addition of a low B string and a high C string) and the five-string (with a low B), which was a spinoff of Jackson's invention.

The groove in Figure 10-7 is challenging to play, so take your time with it. The extra effort will be well worth it when you feel comfortable enough to use it when playing with a band.

TRACK 59, 0:00

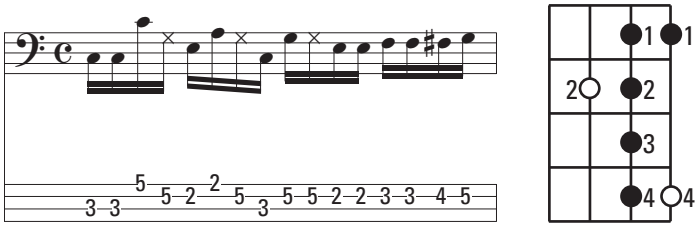


Figure 10-7: Fusion groove for a major or dominant chord.

Figure 10-8 shows a fusion-style groove for a dominant chord (Mixolydian mode). Start this groove with your middle finger.

TRACK 59, 0:33

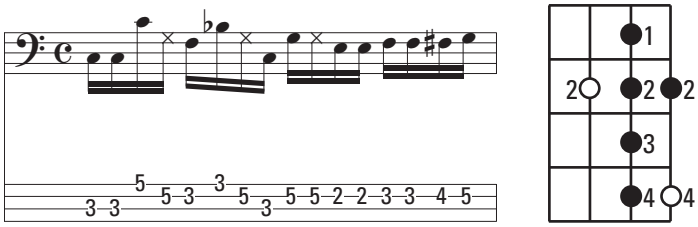


Figure 10-8: Fusion groove for a dominant chord.

Many fusion-style tunes have an extended section of just one chord. With this type of tune, you don't have to move your groove from chord to chord. In other words, you can use a groove that covers all four strings of your bass. Figure 10-9 shows such a groove. This groove, which is based on a Mixolydian mode (for a dominant chord), requires no shifting if you start it with your middle finger. It may take a bit of effort to get it under your belt — I mean fingers — but the effort will be well worth it.

TRACK 59, 1:07

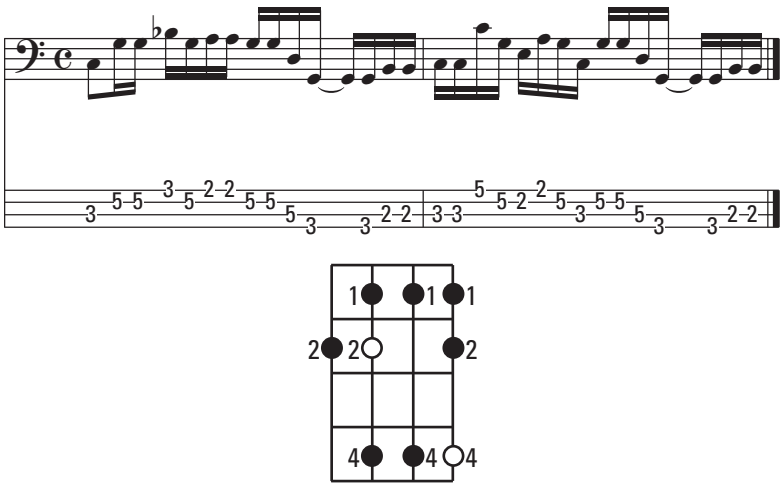


Figure 10-9: Fusion groove over four strings on a dominant chord.

On Track 59 you can hear how the busy bass grooves in Figures 10-7 through 10-9 interact with equally busy drum parts. It's a typical way of playing fusion grooves for both bass and drums.

Funk: Sounding Heavy and Deep

Funk is not only a collective term for funk styles; it also refers to a particular style of playing. *Funk style* is normally percussive in sound and is often played with a thumb (slap) technique (see Chapter 2). But fingerstyle is just as good at producing the percussive sound of funk. Flea (of the Red Hot Chili Peppers) and Victor Wooten (who plays with Béla Fleck and the Flecktones) are two excellent thumbers. Francis Rocco Prestia (of Tower of Power) is a master of fingerstyle funk. Marcus Miller (a solo artist) is great at using both the fingerstyle and the thumb technique.

The note choices in funk style are often *neutral* (they work for more than one tonality); the emphasis is on rhythm. Figure 10-10 is an example of a funk groove that's intended to be played with a slap style. Of course, when your thumb starts to blister from all that slapping, you can always play this groove with fingerstyle. This particular groove moves through a little mini-progression (a sequence of chords) that's common in funk.

TRACK 60

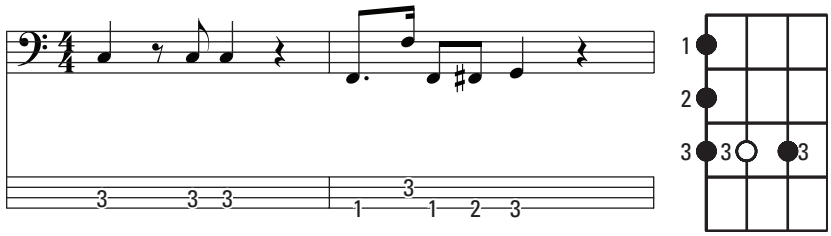


Figure 10-10: Funk groove played in a slap style.

ON THE CD

On Track 60 you can hear a distinct difference in the way the groove from Figure 10-10 sounds compared to the other grooves in this section, due to the fact that it's slapped (thumb style).

TIP

You can try the slap technique on almost any of the other grooves in this section, though I'd recommend getting comfortable with them in fingerstyle playing first.

Figure 10-11 shows a funk groove that can be played over either a dominant or a minor chord. It has an aggressive attitude. Start the groove with the index finger or middle finger of your left hand.

TRACK 61, 0:00

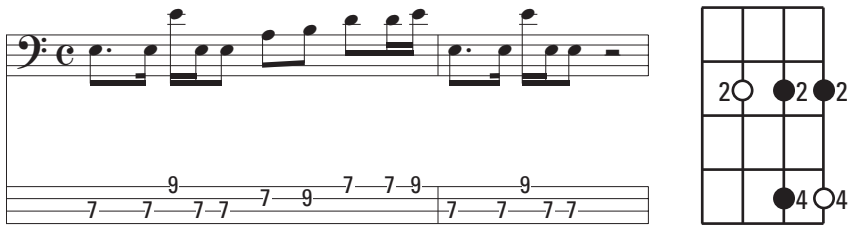


Figure 10-11: Funk groove for a dominant or minor tonality.

Figure 10-12 shows a funk groove that can be played over a major tonality. (It also works over a dominant tonality.) This groove represents a happy-sounding funk. This happy sound isn't common, but sometimes the happy funk tunes have a way of sneaking up on you, so be ready.

TRACK 61, 0:28

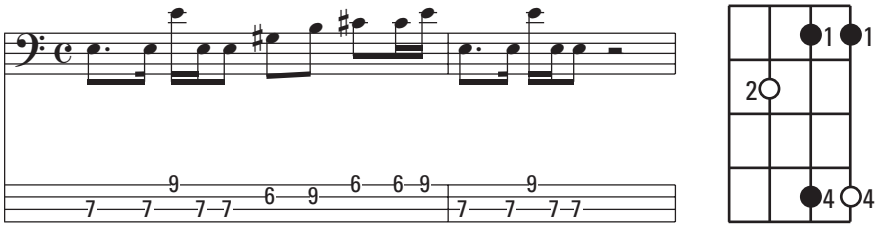


Figure 10-12: Funk groove using a major tonality.

The groove in Figure 10-13 is a heavier funk groove in a minor tonality with a chromatic tone added. (***Remember:*** The more notes in a funk groove, the lighter the groove; the fewer notes in the groove, the heavier the groove.) Start this groove with your pinkie or ring finger to keep the shifts to a minimum.

TRACK 61, 0:57

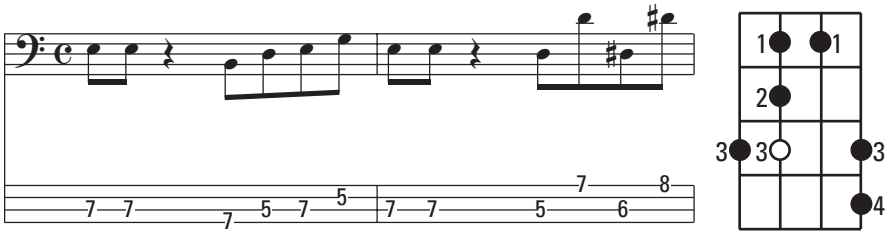


Figure 10-13: Heavy funk groove using a minor tonality.

Figure 10-14 shows a heavy funk groove in a major or dominant tonality. While the major tonality isn't commonly found in funk, it's a good idea to be prepared in case you encounter one. Instead of making this groove a blatant major by adding a 3, you can avoid the 3 altogether by substituting the 6 (a neutral note). Start this groove with your pinkie to keep the shifts to a minimum.

TRACK 61, 1:26

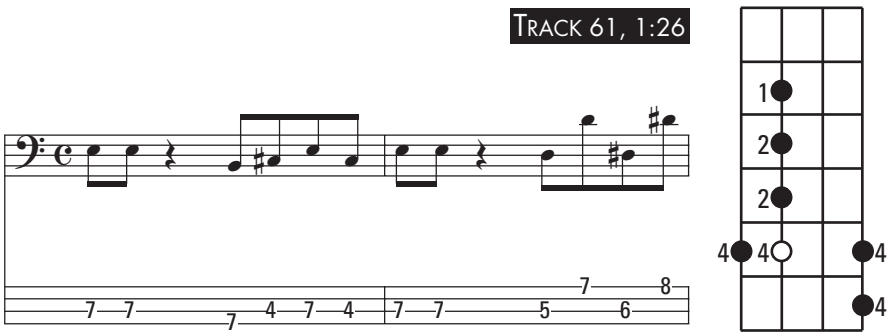


Figure 10-14: Heavy funk groove for a major or dominant tonality.

In Figure 10-15, you have a funk groove that fits over both minor and dominant chords and is played in fingerstyle. (I suggest using fingerstyle playing when you have a lot of fast-moving notes in a groove.) Start this groove with your pinkie or ring finger.

TRACK 61, 1:55

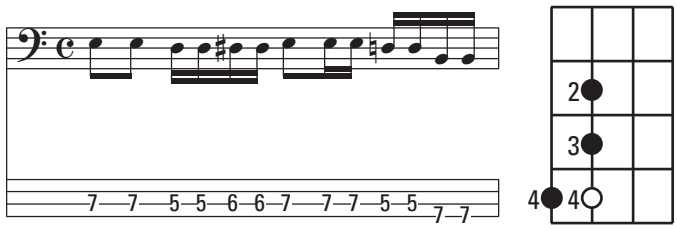


Figure 10-15: Fingerstyle funk for a minor or dominant tonality.

Figure 10-16 shows you a fingerstyle funk in a major tonality (the counterpart of the groove from Figure 10-15). Start it with your pinkie.

TRACK 61, 2:22

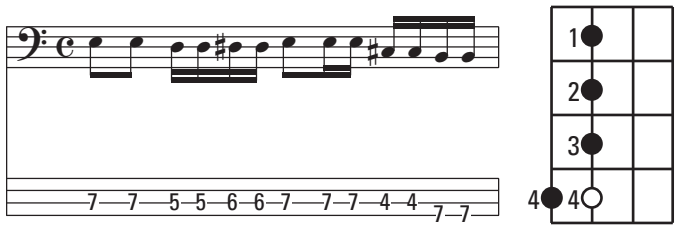


Figure 10-16: Fingerstyle funk using a major tonality.

No matter how you play the grooves in this section, make them funky. Practice them with a metronome (see Chapter 3) and make them precise — and above all, enjoy!

ON THE CD

Listen to the slight variations of Figures 10-11 through 10-16 on Track 61. Figure 10-11 sounds dominant or minor, whereas Figure 10-12 is definitely major; Figure 10-13 is minor and its counterpart in Figure 10-14 is major or dominant; Figure 10-15 is minor or dominant and Figure 10-16 is major. These differences can be difficult to distinguish at first, but with frequent listening you can train your ear to hear the differences between major, minor, and dominant immediately.

Hip-Hop: Featuring Heavy Funk with Heavy Attitude

Hip-hop entered the music world in the 1990s. This style features a fat bass groove that sounds more laid-back than some of the other funk styles. Hip-hop is all about the message; the bass groove provides an important but unobtrusive accompaniment to the vocals. The bass line isn't very busy, but it's well timed and repetitive. Raphael Saadiq is a well-known hip-hop bassist; he's best known for his work with D'Angelo and Tony Toni Tone.

Figure 10-17 shows a hip-hop-style bass groove. Start the groove with your ring finger.

TRACK 62, 0:00

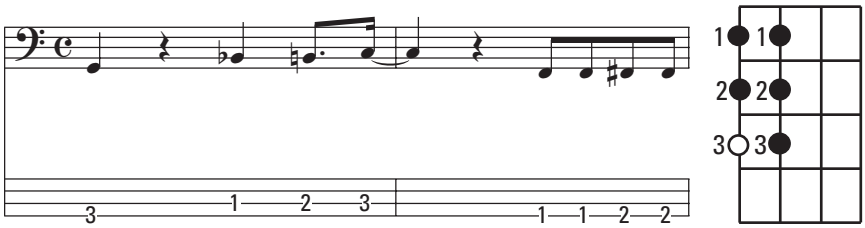


Figure 10-17: Hip-hop groove.

The tonality in hip-hop is often minor, but it may occasionally be dominant. The groove doesn't move much from its starting chord. The feel and attitude are the most important features of the hip-hop groove.

Figure 10-18 shows another groove in hip-hop style, this time for a minor or dominant tonality. Start this groove with your middle finger.

TRACK 62, 0:27

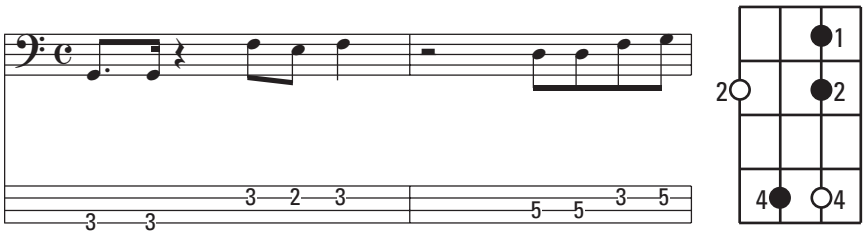


Figure 10-18: Hip-hop groove for a minor or dominant tonality.

Figure 10-19 features a groove for a major or dominant tonality; it's for the happy hip-hoppers. Start this groove with your middle finger.

TRACK 62, 0:53

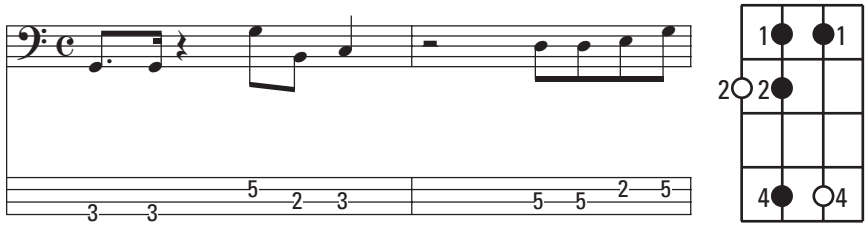


Figure 10-19: Hip-hop groove for a major or dominant tonality.

ON THE CD

As you listen to the grooves from Figures 10-17 through 10-19 on Track 62, notice the long spaces between each note. Hip-hop grooves often use lots of space and only a few notes.

A synthesizer is sometimes used to play the bass groove in hip-hop, but nothing grooves like the real thing.

Knowing What to Do When You Just Want to Funkifize a Tune

You want to bring in da funk, but how? That's a loaded question. You need a groove that does the funk genre justice and at the same time is ambiguous enough to fit over just about any chord. Voilá: I present to you the slam-dunk-funk-R & B/Soul-always-makes-people-happy groove that gets the job done. When you're in a pinch and don't know what to play on a song, whip out the hip little groove in Figure 10-20 to hold down the bottom. Chances are you'll be right on the money with it.

ON THE CD

Try out the one-size-fits-all groove by playing it along with Track 63, which is a pretty standard song for the funk genre. The song's harmony changes between dominant and minor, but your groove pattern doesn't change at all. (For more on dominant and minor scales, check out Chapter 5.) You simply move the pattern to the new root, and you're ready to get funky.

TRACK 63

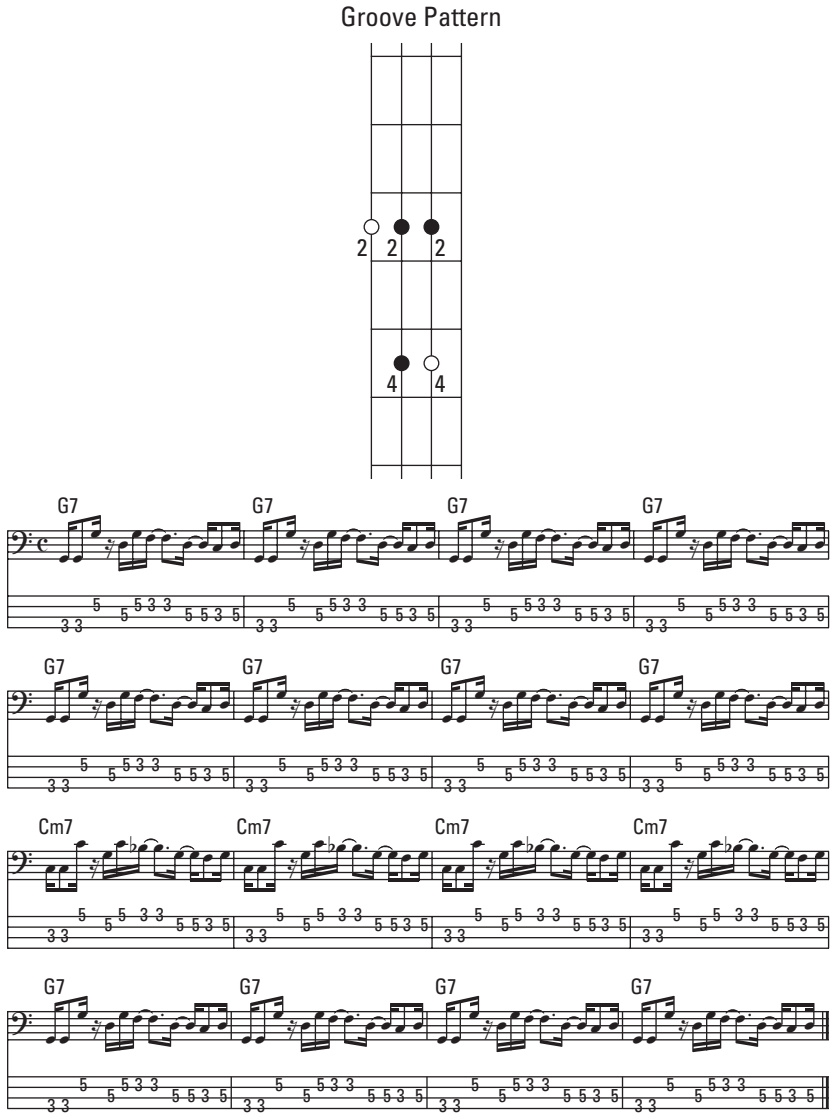


Figure 10-20: Generic funk groove and song.

Chapter 11

Sampling International Flavors: Bass Styles from Around the World

In This Chapter

- Swaying to bossa nova
- Playing Afro-Cuban grooves
- Jammin' to reggae
- Partying to soca
- Rocking out to ska
- Warming up to South African grooves
- Moving to the world beat

Ah, imagine it: Cool ocean breezes, white-sand beaches, palm trees, and, of course, the sound of great bass grooves with native flavor. In this chapter, you discover how to play bass grooves from exotic locales like South America, the Caribbean, and South Africa. Rhythm is the all-important ingredient for bass grooves in these international styles. The harmony itself is often fairly simple.

All the grooves in this chapter provide you with a whole new way to use rhythm. So the next time you feel like visiting an exotic location, grab your bass instead of your sunscreen and visit these exotic places musically.

Bossa Nova: Baskin' in a Brazilian Beat

If you've ever heard "Girl from Ipanema," you're familiar with bossa nova. Antonio Carlos Jobim, who wrote "Girl from Ipanema," is one of the best-known composers of bossa nova tunes. Bossa nova music (which is native to Brazil) has a light, swaying quality and a sensuous, easygoing groove. *Bossas* (short for bossa nova tunes) are usually of medium tempo.

The bass line in bossa nova is almost always a root-5 combination (see Chapter 6), which fits over all major, minor, and dominant chords, and allows you to play a very repetitious bass groove.

The groove in Figure 11-1 shows a typical bossa nova groove for a major, dominant, or minor tonality. You can start it with either your index or middle finger, and you don't have to shift your left hand.

TRACK 64, 0:00

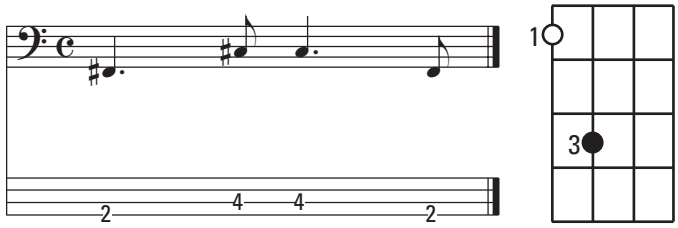


Figure 11-1: Bossa nova groove for a major, minor, or dominant chord.

When bossa novas are played as jazz tunes, you occasionally encounter *half-diminished* chords where the 5 is flatted. In these cases, you satisfy the harmonic requirements for the half-diminished chord by simply playing a groove with a root and a ♭5.

Figure 11-2 shows a groove in a half-diminished tonality (Locrian mode; see Chapter 5 for more on modes). This groove is similar to the groove from Figure 11-1, but the 5 is changed to ♭5 to accommodate the ♭5 in the chord. To avoid shifting, start the groove with your index or middle finger.

TRACK 64, 0:19

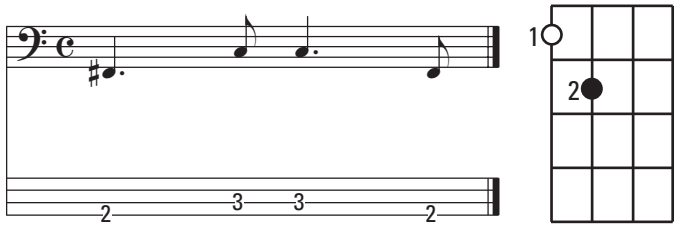


Figure 11-2: Bossa nova groove for a half-diminished chord.

ON THE CD

Figures 11-1 and 11-2 can be heard on Track 64. It's the typical sound of a bossa nova groove — solid, unhurried, and predictable.

Afro-Cuban: Ordering Up Some Salsa (Hold the Chips, Please)

Afro-Cuban music is a mixture of Cuban and African rhythms, with musical elements from Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, Africa, Brazil, and other parts of South America thrown in for good measure. Lincoln Goines and Andy Gonzales, two session players, are masters of this style. The Afro-Cuban style is often referred to as *Latin* or *salsa,* so don't be surprised when someone calls for salsa and expects to get the music instead of the sauce that goes with tortilla chips.

The bass groove in Afro-Cuban music often emphasizes the root and 5, but the *rhythmic syncopation* (notes played between the beats, on the offbeats) takes some getting used to. Afro-Cuban music has a fast-moving style, so buckle your seat belt.

Figure 11-3 shows a bass groove that starts on the first beat of each measure. The groove includes syncopation, and it fits over major, minor, and dominant tonalities. Start this groove with your index or middle finger to avoid shifting.

TRACK 65, 0:00

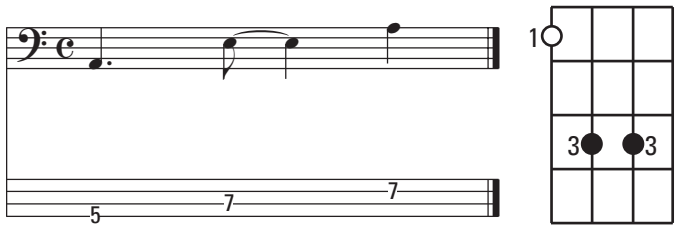


Figure 11-3: Afro-Cuban groove for a major, minor, or dominant chord.

In Figure 11-4 you have an Afro-Cuban groove that's similar to the one in Figure 11-3 (syncopation and all), but this one is for a half-diminished chord. Start this groove with your index or middle finger.

TRACK 65, 0:12

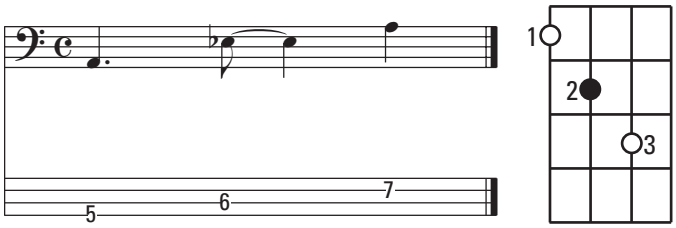


Figure 11-4: Afro-Cuban groove for a half-diminished chord.

Figure 11-5 shows another version of the groove from Figure 11-3, this time with a syncopation added at the beginning of the measure. Playing notes off the beat takes a little getting used to, but it provides a very cool feel after you get the hang of it. Start the groove in Figure 11-5 with your index or middle finger. You can use this Afro-Cuban groove for major, minor, or dominant chords.

TRACK 65, 0:18

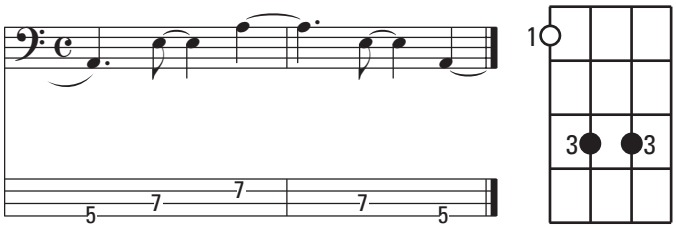


Figure 11-5: Afro-Cuban groove with syncopation for a major, minor, or dominant chord.

The groove in Figure 11-6 uses the same syncopated rhythm as the one in Figure 11-4, but this time a ♭5 is substituted for the 5 to accommodate a half-diminished chord. Start this groove with your index or middle finger.

TRACK 65, 0:42

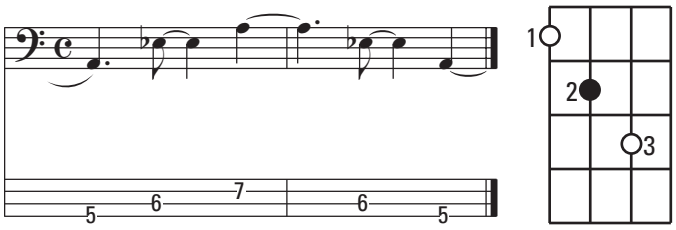


Figure 11-6: Afro-Cuban groove with syncopation for a half-diminished chord.

ON THE CD

You can hear the grooves from Figures 11-3 through 11-6 on Track 65. Listen to how the groove starts *on* the beat in the first two examples, and *off* the beat (with an anticipation) in the last two examples.

Reggae: Relaxing with Offbeat "Riddims"

Reggae music is most often associated with Jamaica and the Caribbean islands. The trademarks of reggae bass are a thuddy sound (short, dark notes) and offbeat rhythms (syncopation) — usually spelled and pronounced "riddims" by reggae musicians.

Aston "Family Man" Barrett (who played with Bob Marley) and Robbie Shakespeare (who played with Peter Tosh) are two giants of reggae bass. Modern bassists, such as P-Nut of the group 311, also play this style to perfection.

With reggae, you often hear a lot of *space* (rests when the bassist isn't playing). Figure 11-7 shows an example of a reggae groove with a lot of space. This groove fits over a minor chord, which is a common chord in reggae music. Start this groove with your index finger to avoid shifting, and keep the length of each note short.

TRACK 66, 0:00

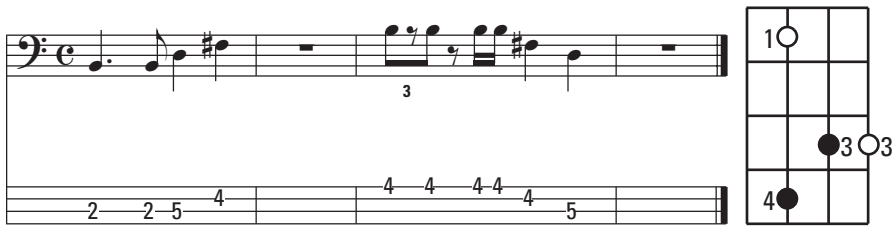


Figure 11-7: Reggae groove for a minor chord.

If you want to play the groove in Figure 11-7 over a major or dominant chord, you need to change the ♭3 in the chord to a 3. Figure 11-8 shows a version of this groove adapted for a major or dominant chord. Start the groove with your index finger.

TRACK 66, 0:31

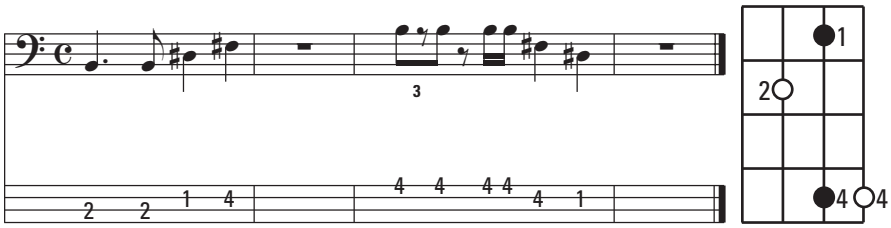


Figure 11-8: Reggae groove for a major or dominant chord.

You may sometimes hear a reggae bass groove that has a flurry of notes. Figure 11-9 shows you such a groove, which is structured in a tonality that fits over major, minor, and dominant chords. You can start this groove with either your index or middle finger.

TRACK 66, 1:02

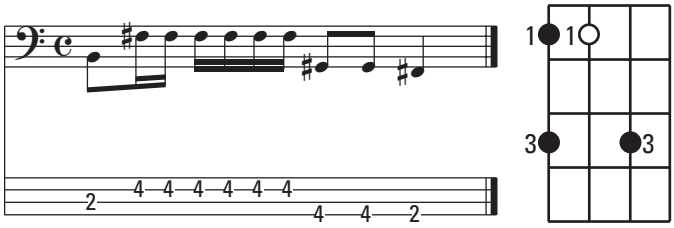


Figure 11-9: Reggae groove for a major, minor, or dominant chord.

The *drop-one* technique, in which the bassist doesn't play on the first beat of the measure, is a typical reggae device. Figure 11-10 shows you a drop-one reggae-style bass groove for a major or dominant chord. Start this groove with your middle finger.

TRACK 66, 1:20

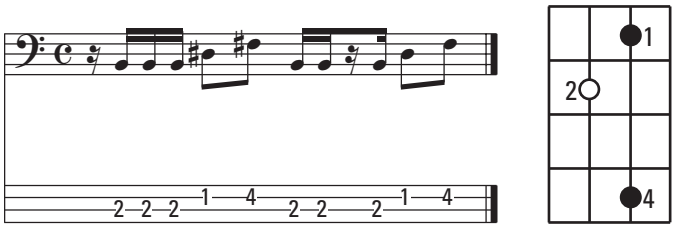


Figure 11-10: Drop-one reggae groove for a major or dominant chord.

When listening to the groove shown in Figure 11-10 (Track 66), notice how the drummer hits on the *downbeat* (the first beat of the measure), and the bassist follows right after.

Figure 11-11 shows the minor version of the groove in Figure 11-10. You start this groove with your index finger.

TRACK 66, 1:38

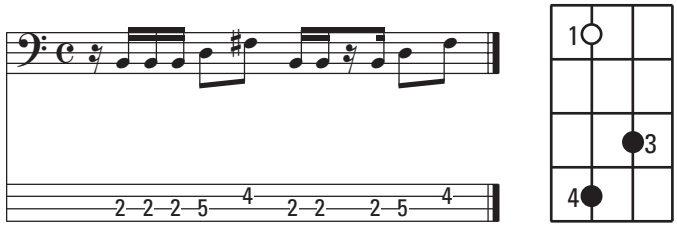


Figure 11-11: Drop-one reggae groove for a minor chord.

Track 66 starts with four clicks and then a four-beat drum intro before the bass comes in. The rhythm in Figures 11-7 through 11-11 is unpredictable and keeps the listener guessing as to what the next note is, which is typical for reggae.

Use the previous reggae grooves as a blueprint for creating your own grooves, and listen to a lot of reggae bands for inspiration. Better yet, take your bass with you on a vacation to Jamaica!

Soca: Blending American and Calypso Party Sounds

Soca is a combination of American Soul (*So-*) and Caribbean Calypso (*-Ca*). This style is fast, driving, and a lot of fun. The feel often emphasizes the *weak beats* of a measure (the beats in the middle of the measure) rather than the downbeat.

The soca groove in Figure 11-12 uses notes that fit over a major or dominant chord. Notice the heavy use of *offbeats* (notes played between the beats) after the first measure. You may find this music difficult to play until you get used to hearing it. Start the groove with your middle finger.

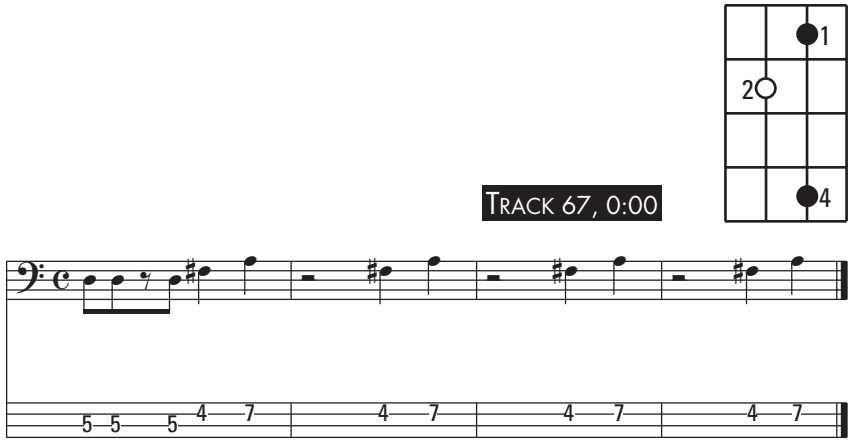


Figure 11-12: Soca groove for a major or dominant chord.

The minor version of this groove is shown in Figure 11-13. The groove has the same structure, but this time you play the ♭3 instead of the 3 for the chord. Start this groove with your index finger.

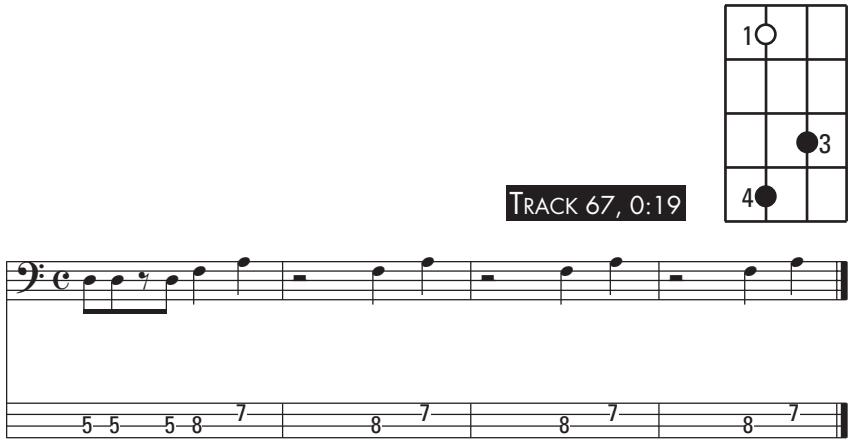


Figure 11-13: Soca groove for a minor chord.

In Figure 11-14, you have a soca groove that uses notes common to major, minor, and dominant chords. Start this groove with your pinkie.

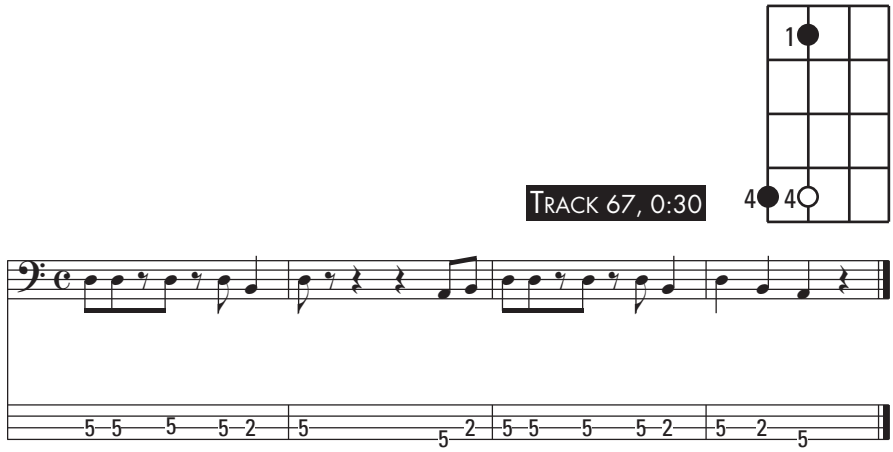


Figure 11-14: Soca groove for a major, minor, or dominant chord.

ON THE CD

It's party time on Track 67. The soca grooves in Figures 11-12 through 11-14 are laced with plenty of percussion, and the bassist is busy as well, driving this music at a good clip.

Combining Reggae and Rock: The Distinct Sound of Ska

Ska is a motley combination of Caribbean and American styles. Think of it as mixing the offbeat rhythms of reggae with the driving force of rock. (See Chapter 8 for more on rock music.) Ska is very *up-tempo* (fast) and filled with high energy. Sting (most famous for his work with the Police) has been a prime force in ska music, playing some of the most memorable ska bass parts, which are often quite busy.

The ska groove in Figure 11-15 is an example of a busy bass line using notes that fit over major, minor, or dominant chords. No shifting is necessary. You can start this groove with your index or middle finger.

TRACK 68, 0:00

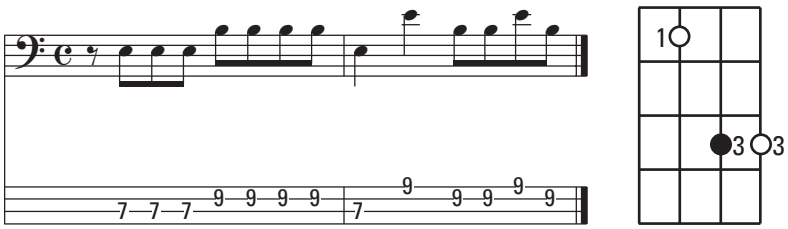


Figure 11-15: Ska groove for a major, minor, or dominant chord.

ON THE CD

As you listen to the groove from Figure 11-15 on the accompanying CD (Track 68), notice that the bass groove doesn't start on the first beat of the measure, which is often the case in ska.

In Figure 11-16, you have a ska groove that uses the notes for a major or dominant chord; you get to play it on the downbeat of the measure. Start this groove with your middle finger.

TRACK 68, 0:16

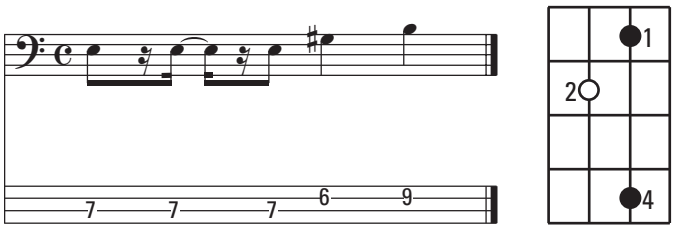


Figure 11-16: Ska groove for a major or dominant chord.

The minor version of the groove in Figure 11-16 is shown in Figure 11-17. If you start this groove with your index finger, you don't have to shift your left hand.

TRACK 68, 0:37

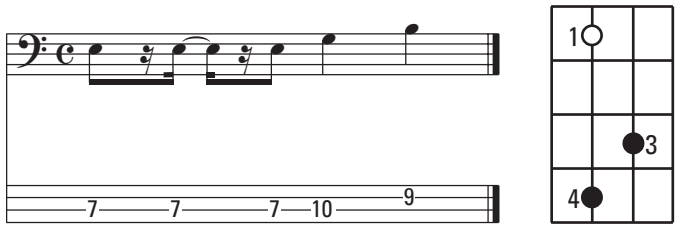


Figure 11-17: Ska groove for a minor chord.

ON THE CD

The sound of the ska grooves in Figures 11-15 through 11-17 can be heard on Track 68. Notice the exotic rhythms and the steadiness of rock.

South African: Experimenting with Exotic Downbeat Grooves

South African music is an exotic blend of native rhythms with European and Caribbean influences. Bakithi Khumalo, whose bass playing is a wonderful example of South African style, recorded some excellent bass lines with Paul Simon.

The groove in Figure 11-18 shows an example of how a South African groove can say a lot with few notes. This groove fits perfectly over a major or dominant chord. Start with your middle finger to avoid shifting, and don't even try to sit still when playing.

TRACK 69, 0:00

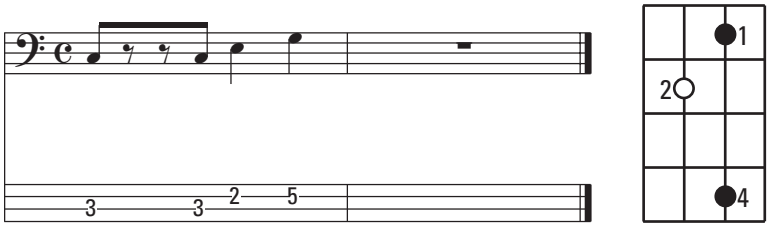


Figure 11-18: South African groove for a major or dominant chord.

ON THE CD

As you listen to the groove from Figure 11-18, notice how the bass and drums interact to give it a downbeat quality.

Figure 11-19 shows the minor version of the groove from Figure 11-18. The minor version simply replaces the 3 with a ♭3, which changes your fingering. You need to start this groove with your index finger.

TRACK 69, 0:21

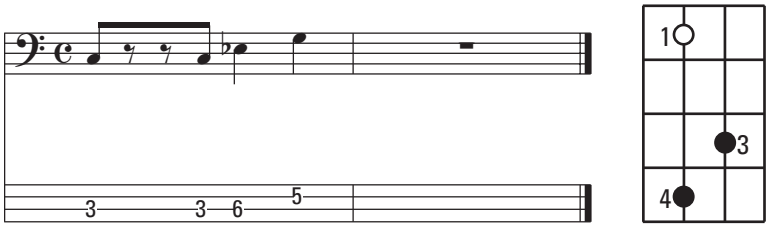


Figure 11-19: South African groove for a minor chord.

In Figure 11-20, you have a South African groove that uses *neutral notes* — root, 5, and 2 an octave up — notes that fit over major, dominant, and minor chords. This groove does require a small shift with your left hand, but this shift is easy if you start with your index finger.

TRACK 69, 0:33

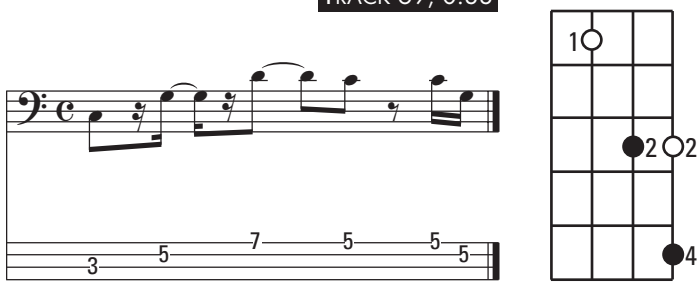


Figure 11-20: South African groove for a major, dominant, or minor chord.

ON THE CD

You can hear what the South African grooves in Figures 11-18 through 11-20 sound like when you listen to Track 69. Notice how the bass drum is played on all four beats to steady this rhythm.

Music without Borders: Grooving to the World Beat

World beat refers to any style of folk music from around the world (African, Latin American, or Caribbean, for instance) that's fused with Western rock or other pop influences. It's certainly no easy task to be up on every one of the latest world beat styles, so in this section, I provide you with one groove that you can count on as a default when someone asks you to play the style of an obscure African tribal celebration.

The pattern in Figure 11-21 gives you a great starting point toward getting the music going. This song uses chords that are common to the world beat genre (just listen to "Pata, Pata" by African artist Miriam Makeba or "Pressure Drop" by Jamaican group Toots & the Maytals; both songs use the same chords), so get comfortable with how this groove feels under your fingers. You're certain to encounter this progression again and again in your world beat travels.

TRACK 70

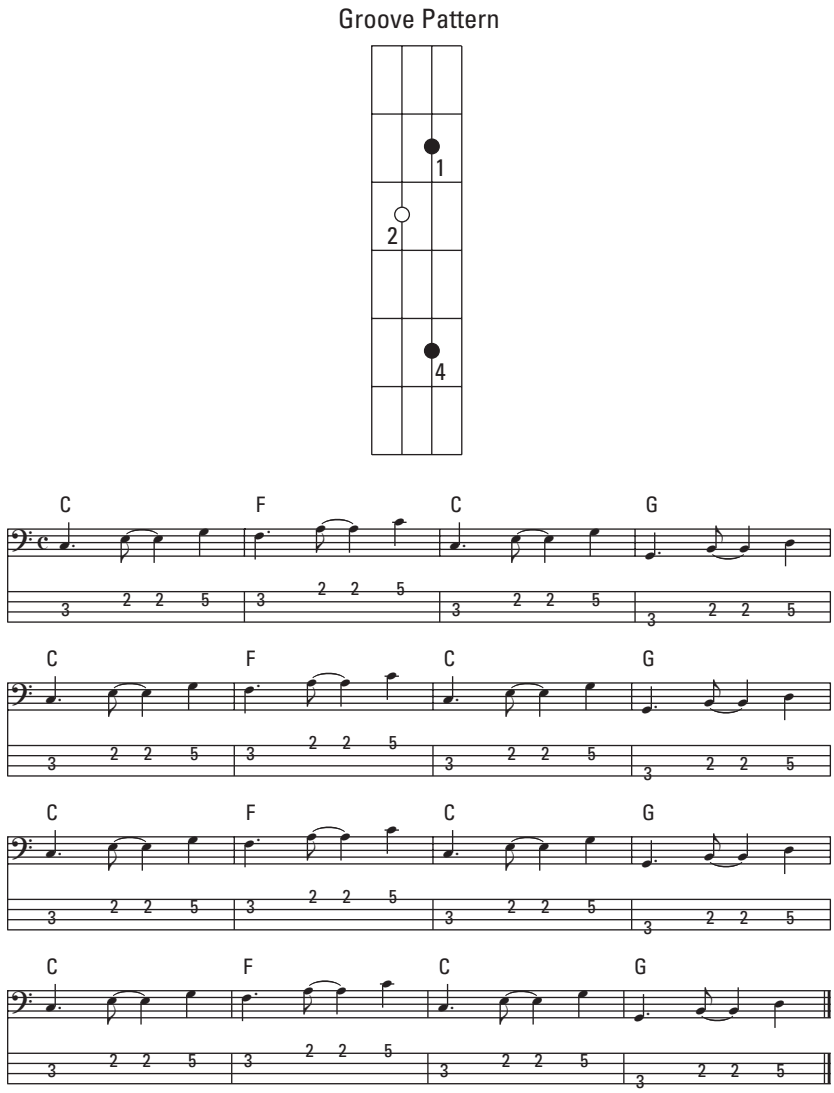


Figure 11-21: World beat song with a typical chord progression.

Play the pattern in Figure 11-21 with Track 70 to hear how well it moves through the rhythm and harmony of the song.

Chapter 12

Playing in Odd Meters: Not Strange, Just Not the Norm

In This Chapter

- Playing the waltz
- Dealing with beats in 5/4 and 7/4 time

Generally, when you say that something is odd, you're implying that it's out of the ordinary or unusual. In music, that implication holds true; playing in an *odd meter* means playing a tune that doesn't have the usual four beats per measure. The word *odd* also refers to uneven numbers. Each measure in an odd meter tends to have an odd number of beats. For example, a tune may have three, five, seven, or more beats per measure. So, is playing in odd meter a daunting task? Not at all. You don't even have to count past three. In this chapter, I show you how to handle odd meters with ease and grace.

An Odd-Meter Oldie but Goodie: The Waltz

The waltz is the most common of all odd-meter styles. In fact, the waltz is so common, that it's not thought of as being in odd meter at all. A waltz has three quarter notes per measure (thus the 3/4 symbol in Figures 12-1 and 12-2 at the beginning of the staff), and your count is **1**-2-3, **1**-2-3, and so on. (***Note:*** You accent the bold numbers.) You frequently encounter the waltz in musicals and jazz, so it's a good idea to be ready with grooves for the waltz.

The waltz is a technical breeze for the bass player; you usually play only one or two notes per measure, but remember to keep counting. Figure 12-1 shows a typical waltz accompaniment for the bass. Simply play the root or 5 on the first beat of the measure. This accompaniment fits over major, minor, and dominant chords.

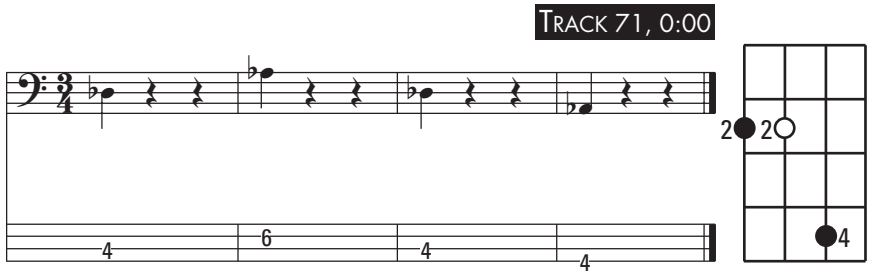


Figure 12-1: Waltz accompaniment for major, minor, and dominant chords.

If you want to spice up your waltz a little, add a note (such as the 5) on beat three — the last beat of each measure. Three-quarter time is so common and so easily recognizable that, by the time you hit the fifth measure or so of the waltz, you don't even have to think about the rhythm. Three-quarter time feels natural.

Figure 12-2 shows a waltz accompaniment that's spiced up with an extra note on the third beat. It's a bit fancier than the example in Figure 12-1 because of the added note, but it's still simple. It fits over major, minor, and dominant chords.

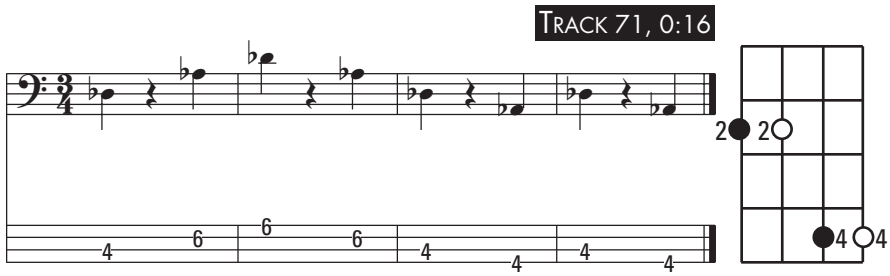


Figure 12-2: Waltz accompaniment using two notes for major, minor, and dominant chords.

On Track 71 you hear the most common odd meter accompaniment in the form of a waltz (see Figures 12-1 and 12-2). The first consists of simply a note on the first beat of each measure and the second adds a leading tone on the last beat of the measure.

The sound of the waltz evokes images of imperial ballrooms in the heart of Europe, filled with ladies dressed in floor-length ball gowns and gentlemen in tuxedos who are turning in circles to the music. Yeah, these guys were party animals, too . . . well . . . sort of.

Beyond the Waltz: Navigating Beats in Odd Meter

The structure of any measure in an odd meter can be divided into groups of two beats and three beats. That's right; it's just a matter of twos and threes. For example, if you have to count to seven in a measure, break it up into groups of two beats and three beats. Instead of counting "one, two, three, four, five, six, seven," count in any of the following ways:

- "One, two, three, one, two, one, two"
- "One, two, one, two, one, two, three"
- "One, two, one, two, three, one, two"

The number of beats is the same, but dividing the count into sets of two and three makes the phrasing manageable.

When choosing the notes you play for tunes in odd meters, select notes that fall naturally into groups of two and three, and connect the groups rhythmically or harmonically. I explain how to do this in the following sections that discuss playing in odd meters of 5/4 and 7/4, the two most common odd meters besides the waltz. Remember that this concept of grouping the notes works for any type of odd meter.

5/4 meter: Not an impossible mission

When you play a tune in 5/4 meter, you have five beats (five quarter notes) per measure instead of the usual four. If you've ever watched the TV show *Mission: Impossible* and heard its distinctive musical theme, you've heard a tune in 5/4. You can think of 5/4 as either a group of two beats followed by a group of three beats, or as a group of three beats followed by a group of two beats. Take a look at Figure 12-3 to see how the beats are grouped.

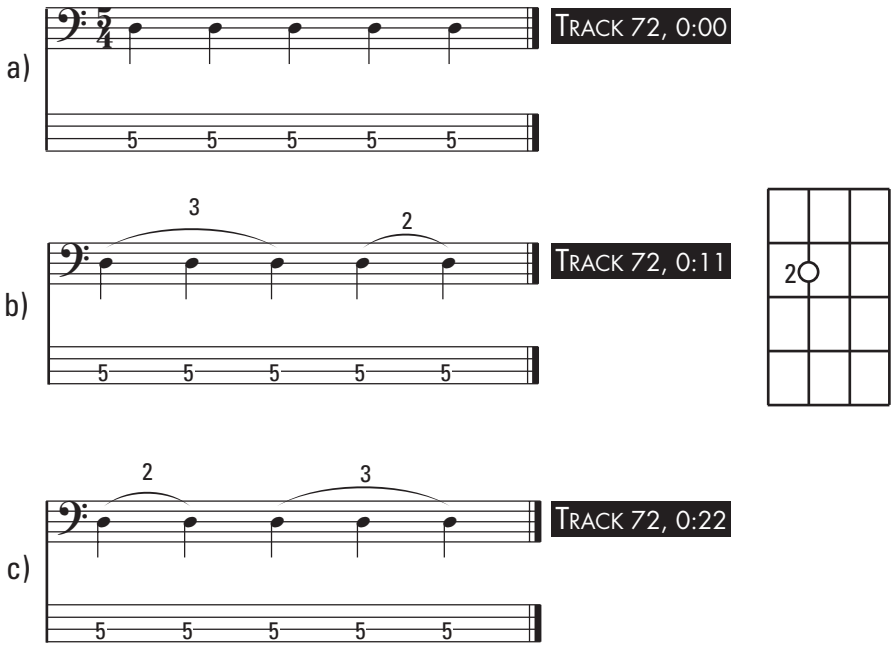


Figure 12-3: Beats in groupings of three-two and two-three in 5/4 meter.

You can translate these groupings into music by playing your notes as a group of two beats followed by a group of three beats, or vice versa. You can count the groove in Figure 12-4 as **1**-2-3-**1**-2 or as **1**-2-**1**-2-3 (accenting the bold numbers). The notes in the groove in Figure 12-4 fit over major, minor, and dominant chords.

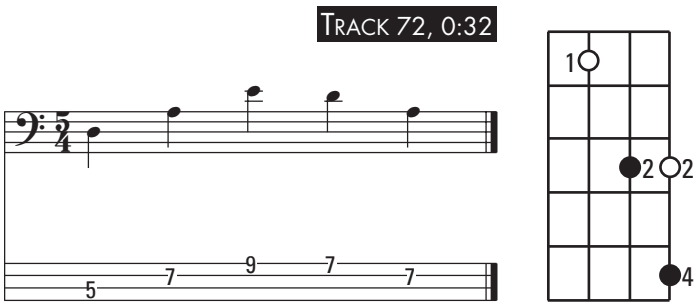


Figure 12-4: Groove in 5/4 meter for major, minor, and dominant chords.

The groove in Figure 12-5 shows a clear three-two grouping in 5/4 meter. Some of the quarter notes are divided into eighth notes, which doesn't change the meter at all. When you look at this figure, notice that

- The first group of notes (the group of three) consists of six eighth notes, which equal three quarter notes.
- The second group (the group of two) consists of two quarter notes.
- The combination equals five beats in all.

The notes fit over major, minor, and dominant chords.

TRACK 72, 0:44

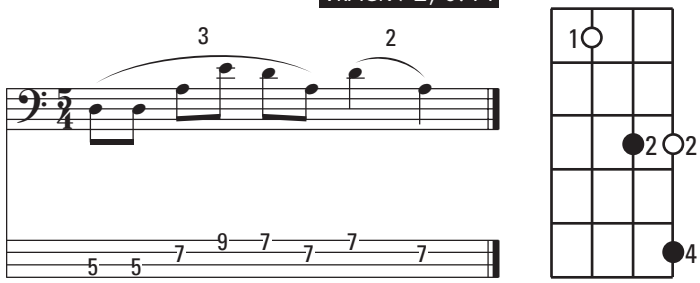


Figure 12-5: Groove in 5/4 using a three-two grouping.

Figure 12-6, on the other hand, shows you a clear two-three grouping in 5/4 meter. When you look at this figure, notice that

- The first group of notes (the group of two) consists of two quarter notes
- The second group of notes (the group of three) consists of six eighth notes

The notes fit over major, minor, and dominant chords.

TRACK 72, 1:06

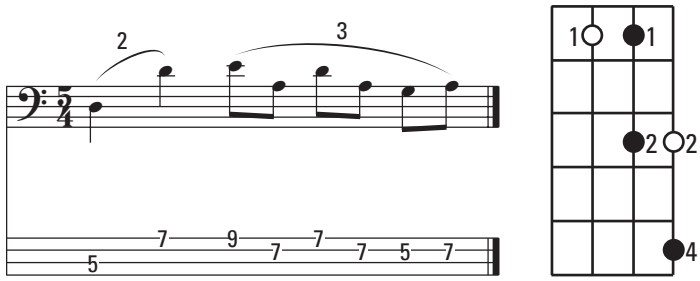


Figure 12-6: Groove in 5/4 using a two-three grouping.

If you want to get really fancy with your 5/4 meter, you can subdivide your beats into sixteenth notes, which requires some funky finger work (see Chapter 3 for more information). Figure 12-7 shows a groove in a two-three grouping using sixteenth notes. The notes in this groove fit over major, minor, and dominant chords, so you don't have to worry about the tonality.

TRACK 72, 1:29

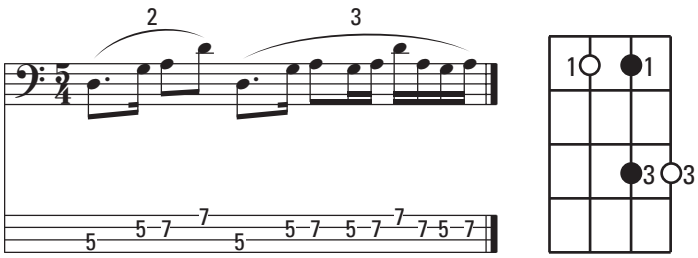


Figure 12-7: Groove in 5/4 using sixteenth notes.

ON THE CD

You can listen to the grooves in Figures 12-3 through 12-7 on Track 72. The first thing to pay attention to is the count-off. You hear five clicks before any of the grooves start. This sets you up to count everything in five. Figure 12-3 demonstrates how you can group the notes by *accenting* certain ones (playing a note louder). Next you can hear the note choices that make your groove fit over major, minor, and dominant chords, followed by the sound of a 5/4 groove with groupings as shown in Figures 12-5 and 12-6. Finally there's the fancy sixteenth-note groove in 5/4 as shown in Figure 12-7, which takes some getting used to, but is a great way to play odd meter and keep the listener guessing.

With the examples in this section, you can see that playing a solid groove in a 5/4 meter isn't such an impossible mission (should you choose to accept it).

7/4 meter: Adding two more beats

The 7/4 meter works the same way as the 5/4 meter (explained in the preceding section), but it has two more beats per measure. Form groups of two and three notes, and you're all set to embark on the creation of a perfectly fine bass groove in 7/4. The song "Money," by the group Pink Floyd, is a successful tune in a 7/4 meter.

The possible groupings of beats for a measure in 7/4 are: three beats, plus two beats, plus two beats — in any order. Take a look at Figure 12-8 to see the different groupings of beats in 7/4 meter.

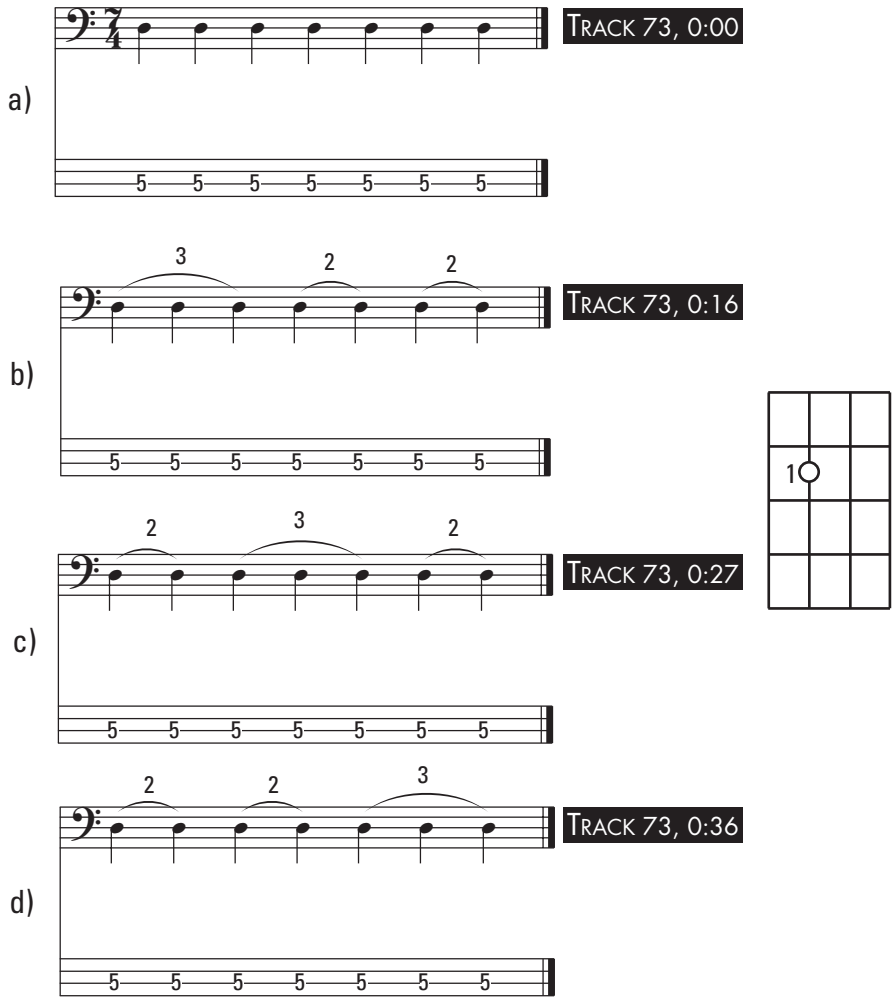


Figure 12-8: Beats in groupings of three-two-two, two-three-two, and two-two-three in 7/4 meter.

You can translate these groupings into music by combining your notes into two groups of two beats and one group of three beats. Group the notes any way you like.

You can count the groove shown in Figure 12-9 as **1**-2-3-**1**-2-**1**-2, **1**-2-**1**-2-3-**1**-2, or **1**-2-**1**-2-**1**-2-3 (accenting the bold numbers). The notes in this groove fit over major, minor, and dominant chords.

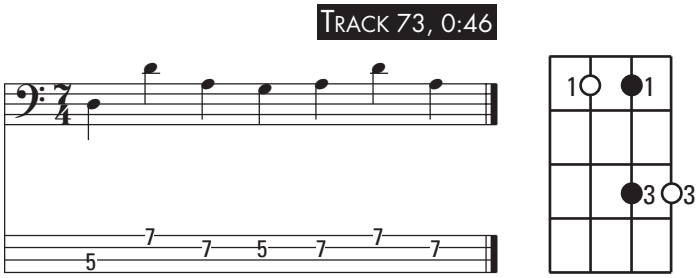


Figure 12-9: Groove in a 7/4 meter for major, minor, and dominant chords.

The groove in Figure 12-10 is a clear three-two-two grouping in 7/4 meter. When you look at this figure, notice that

- The first group (the group of three beats) consists of a quarter note (the first beat) followed by two eighth notes (the second beat) and another quarter note (the third beat).
- The second group (a group of two beats) consists of four eighth notes.
- The third group (the last group of two beats) consists of four eighth notes as well.

The notes in this groove fit over major, minor, and dominant chords.

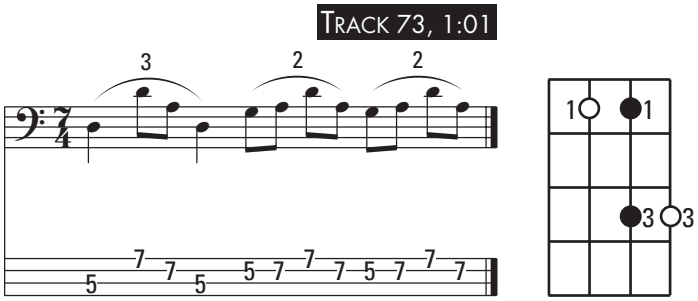


Figure 12-10: Groove in a 7/4 meter using a three-two-two grouping.

Figure 12-11 shows a clear two-three-two grouping in 7/4 meter. When you look at this figure, notice that

- The first group (two beats) consists of two quarter notes.
- The second group (three beats) consists of six eighth notes.
- The last group (two beats) consists of two quarter notes.

The notes in this groove fit over major, minor, and dominant chords.

TRACK 73, 1:18

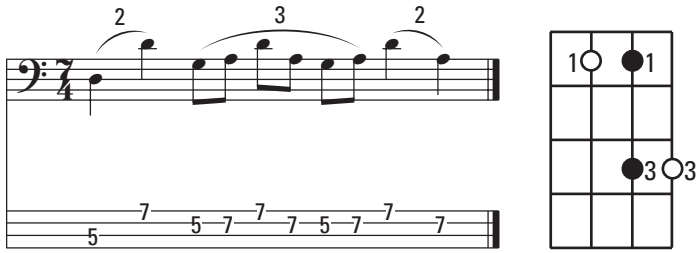


Figure 12-11: Groove in a 7/4 meter using a two-three-two grouping.

Figure 12-12 shows a two-two-three grouping in 7/4 meter. When you look at the figure, notice that

- The first group (two beats) consists of two quarter notes.
- The second group (two beats) consists of four eighth notes.
- The third group (three beats) consists of three quarter notes.

The notes fit over major, minor, and dominant chords.

TRACK 73, 1:34

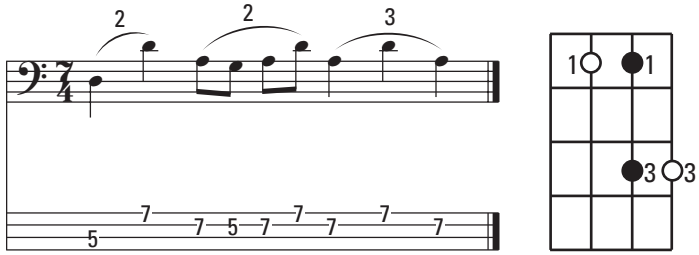


Figure 12-12: Groove in 7/4 meter using a two-two-three grouping.

And if you're brave, here's a 7/4 meter groove subdivided into sixteenth notes for some mind- and finger-boggling playing. Figure 12-13 shows a groove in a two-three-two grouping using sixteenth notes. The notes in this groove fit over major, minor, and dominant chords.

TRACK 73, 1:50

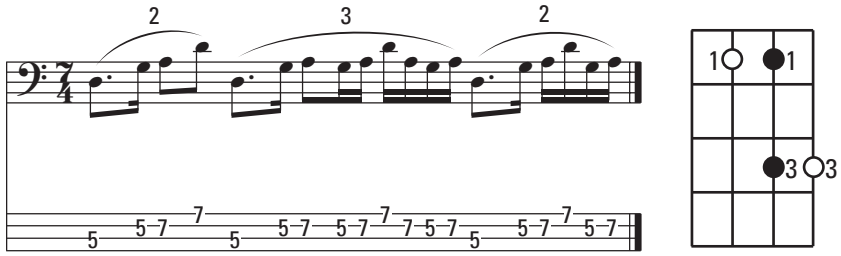


Figure 12-13: Groove in 7/4 using sixteenth notes.

Listen to Track 73 for the sound of the grooves from Figures 12-8 through 12-13. First, you hear the count-off with seven clicks, letting you know that you're in a 7/4 meter. You can hear the bass playing seven even notes. Then you hear the different grouping possibilities of Figure 12-8, followed by a groove that uses the notes to fit a groove over major, minor, and dominant chords (Figure 12-9). Next, listen to how the drums set up the groupings. You can hear the different pitches in the count-off to help you follow the groupings with the selection of real grooves using such groupings (Figures 12-9 through 12-12). Finally, you can listen (and by all means play) to the groove in Figure 12-13 that uses all those fancy rhythms in the form of sixteenth notes.

The trick to playing a song with rapidly changing chords in odd meter is to keep the groove structure simple and consistent. After all, the rhythm alone gives the listeners, as well as the musicians, plenty to chew on. I highly recommend making your groove ambiguous (see Chapter 13) and constant in structure (see Chapter 6) so you can move through the odd-meter chords with relative ease and grace.

Figure 12-14 is a typical odd-meter song (in this case in 5/4) with a different chord for each measure. Notice how the bass groove in this song shifts from the first pattern to a new pattern for the *bridge* (the middle section of the song) to differentiate it from the rest of the music. Both bass grooves, however, are ambiguous as well as constant in structure. You just need to make sure you have both solidly under your fingers so you can shift from one chord to the next with ease.

Give a listen to Track 74 and hear how danceable an odd meter song can sound. Grab your bass and play along as you read the music in Figure 12-14.

TRACK 74

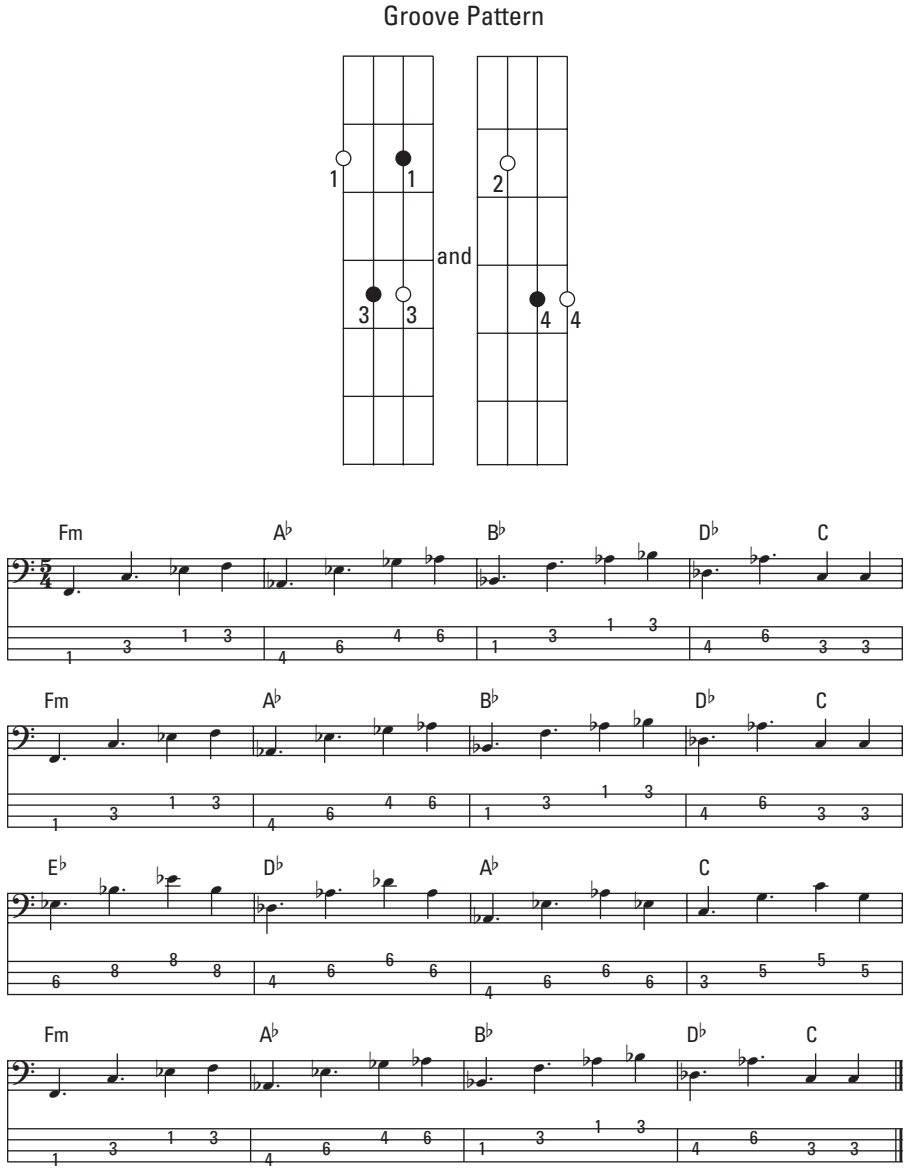


Figure 12-14: Generic song in odd meter.

Chapter 13

Groovin' in a Genre: It's All About Style!

In This Chapter

- Exploring the different ways to play a song
- Knowing when to blend (or not)

Imagine you're invited to a luau and on the big day you show up in shorts and colorful T-shirt with a big lei around your neck. Seems appropriate enough, right? However, as you enter the party, you catch a glimpse of all the other guests wearing their finest tuxedos and ball gowns. It turns out that your expected poolside BBQ is actually a formal dinner party. You stick out like a fresh mustard stain on a wedding dress; you certainly can't blend in with this crowd.

Music genres (jazz, world beat, rock, and so on) work on the same premise — certain elements in each groove indicate which genre you're playing in. If you play your groove in the wrong genre— a funk groove in a country tune, for example — prepare to watch your band mates disappear. But if you master a few basic grooves for each genre and learn to use the appropriate one for your band's interpretation of a tune, get ready to dump your day job for a lucrative career as an in-demand bass player. In this chapter, I demonstrate the simple but crucial steps you can take to ensure that you're always in style, no matter what genre you're asked to play in.

REMEMBER

Each genre may include several different styles that are closely related. Visit Chapters 8 through 12 to find out more, including appropriate grooves for each.

Playing Grooves in Each Genre: One Simple Song Many Genres Strong

The song in Figure 13-1 uses a standard progression that is a common sequence in many different tunes. You can find this exact same chord sequence or large portions of it in plenty of songs in different genres, such as rock and R & B/Soul. I use this same chord progression throughout the chapter, but each rendition of it sounds distinctly different, depending on what genre of groove is being played over it.

Please note: Country and world beat aren't included as individual genres in this section, mainly because they're technically part of pop and Latin, respectively. Also, jazz isn't included because it doesn't traditionally groove (it walks).

REMEMBER

As the groove changes from one genre to the next throughout this chapter, notice how the whole character of the song changes without affecting the harmony or the tempo. (For more on harmony and tempo check out Chapters 5 and 7.) Playing a groove that includes the defining elements of a specific genre makes all the difference.

ON THE CD

On Tracks 75 through 82 you hear a whole band playing the song from Figure 13-1, using grooves in the different genres featured in this chapter. The chords never change, nor does the tempo, but the versions of the song are very different. Wow, one song, many distinctly different genres — no wonder band leaders are always looking especially hard for bass players who can lay down a solid foundation for everyone to build on no matter the genre.

Pop: Backing up the singer-songwriter

Playing space (playing sparingly) is the name of the game when you're performing in the pop genre. A simple, uncluttered *accompaniment* (the bass line you play to support a soloist) is your best choice. Most important is the groove skeleton (see Chapter 6 for a thorough discussion of the groove skeleton). The two notes making up the groove skeleton are hit on 1 and on the *and* of 2 (Chapter 3 provides an explanation on how to count the different parts of a beat). All other notes of the groove fall on eighth notes and lead smoothly to the next chord in the progression.

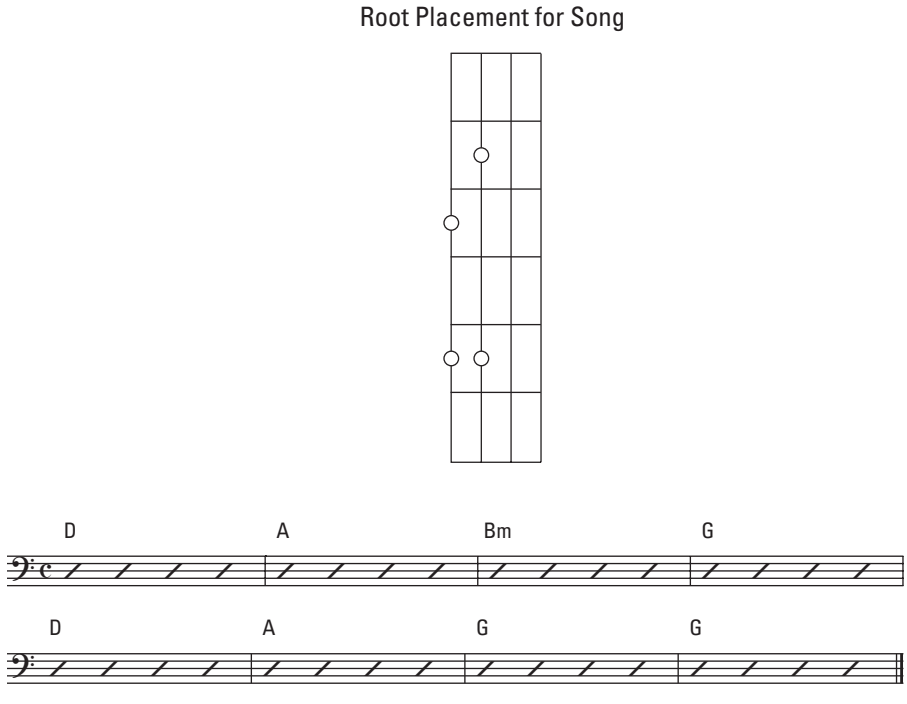


Figure 13-1: Song notation with standard progression.

Take a look at Figure 13-2 for the bass part in a pop tune and listen to Track 75 for the sound of it. Play along with the recording and just enjoy the mellow vibe of this genre. This also works well in a country tune, which is another style in the same genre.

Place your fretting hand so you don't have to shift. In other words, check out the grid and make sure you can reach all the notes without moving to another position.

TRACK 75

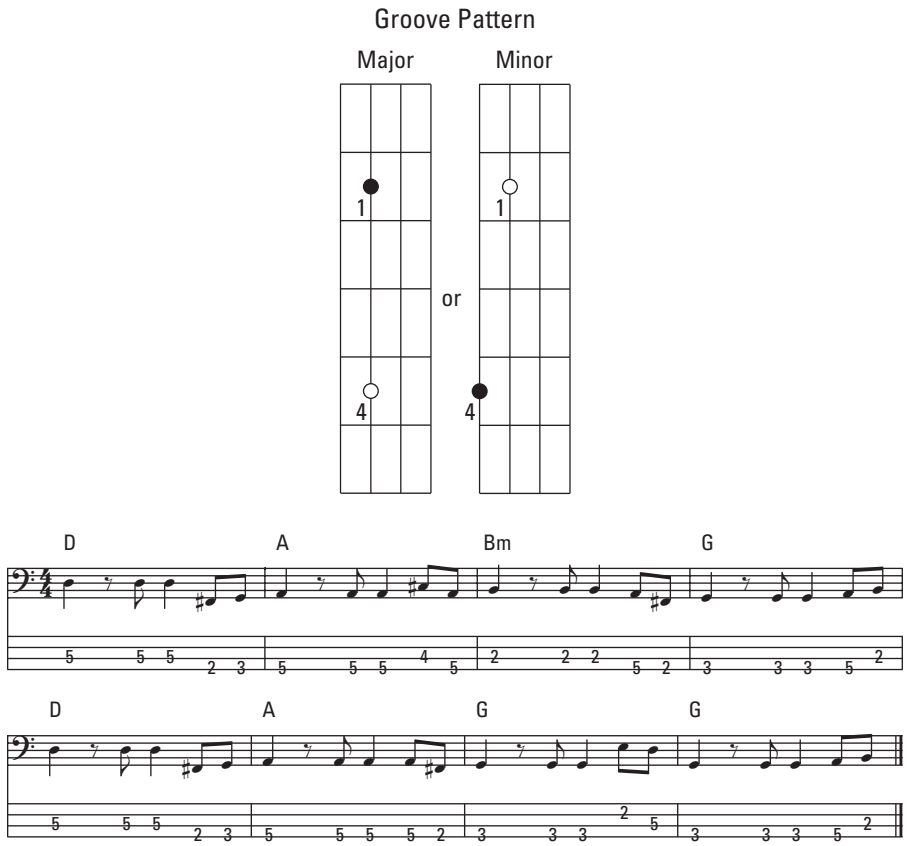


Figure 13-2: A bass part in the pop genre.

Rocking by the quarter, or the eighth note

Playing this chapter's standard progression in the rock genre requires some minor changes, but they yield major results. Listen to how the same song transforms instantly when you play your groove skeleton on beats one and two. The same song, at the same tempo, with the same progression all of a sudden has much more of a punch to it — it has a rock sound. The notes after the groove skeleton fall on eighth notes and lead to the next chord in the progression.

ON THE CD

Figure 13-3 shows the rock bass part to this song. You can listen to it, and play along with it, on Track 76. Get your rockin' attitude ready.

TRACK 76

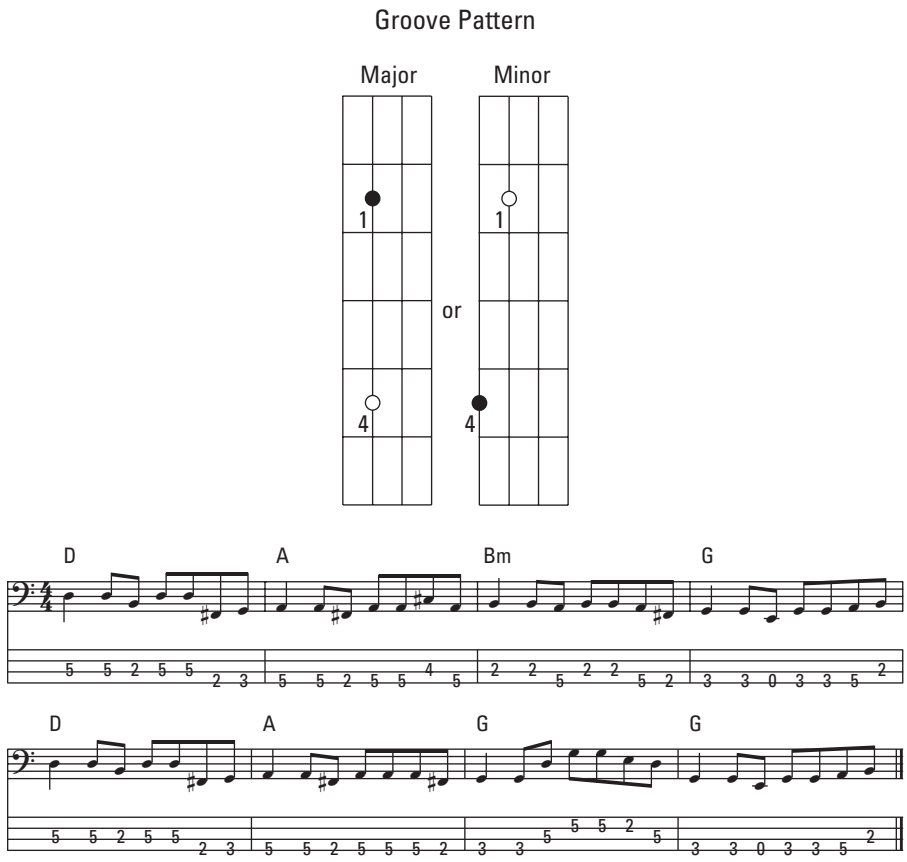


Figure 13-3: Rock bass part with a quarter-note groove skeleton.

You can add some urgency to the rock genre by playing a groove skeleton that includes 1 and the *and* of 1, making this an eighth-note rock. All the other notes stay pretty much the same as with the quarter-note rock. Keep your hand in position; no shifting is required (or desired).

ON THE CD

Take a stab, er, pluck at the bass part in Figure 13-4. Listen to it (and play along) on Track 77.

TRACK 77

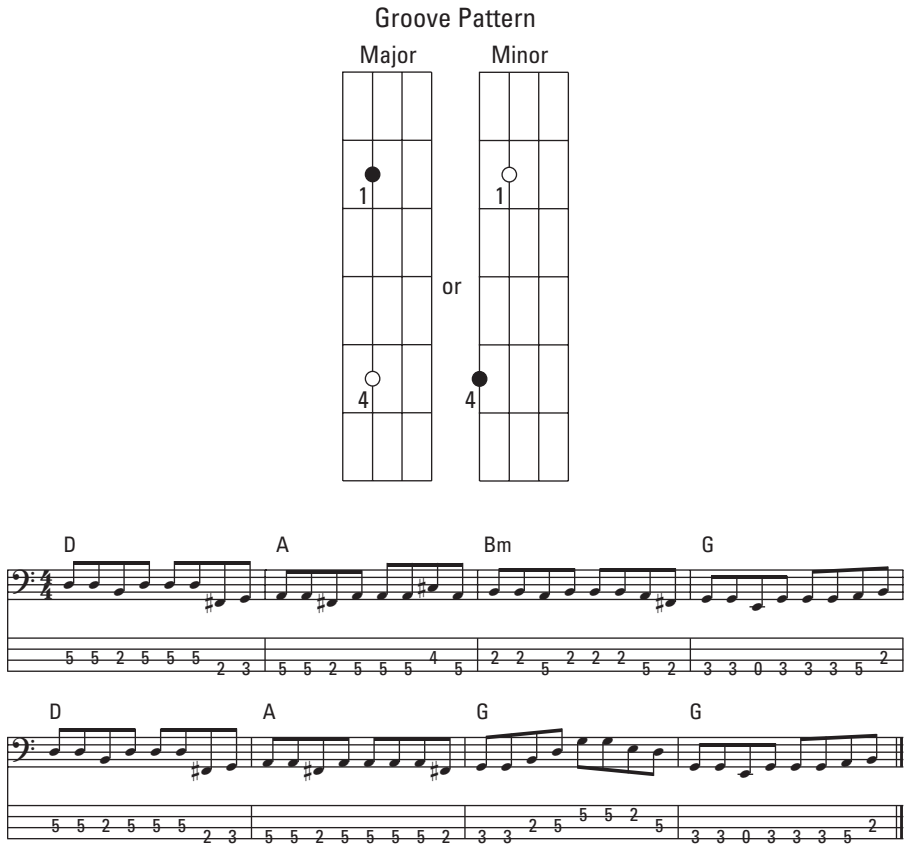


Figure 13-4: Rock bass part with a groove skeleton using two eighth notes.

R & B/Soul, with or without the dot

In the R & B/Soul genre, things get a bit funkier. Two different groove skeletons are most commonly used to evoke this genre. One is the same as the eighth-note rock genre, in which the notes are played on 1 and on the *and* of 1.

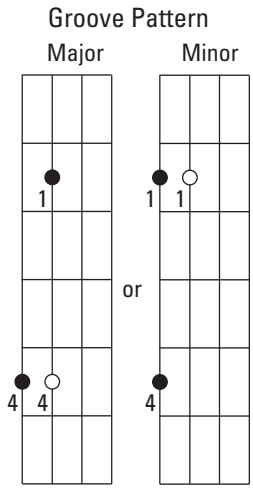
However, you can hear on Track 78 of the CD that this version sounds a heck of a lot funkier and busier — almost percolating. The reason is the placement of the notes *following* the groove skeleton, especially the groove *apex,* the note immediately following the groove skeleton. (Refer to Chapter 6 for an explanation of the groove apex.) These notes fall onto sixteenth-note rhythms, the *e* or *a* of a beat (for the abc's of *1 e and a,* see Chapter 3) along with the eighth-note rhythms. Have a go at it with the help of Figure 13-5.

Here's a helpful hint: To get a grip on sixteenth-note rhythms and all of their subdivisions, practice playing the patterns in Chapter 3. Figure 3-10 will be most helpful.

Adding a dot to the first note of the R & B/Soul groove skeleton (see Chapter 3 for an explanation about the *dot*) is an even clearer indication that you're about to enter Soul City. Your groove skeleton is now on 1 and the *a* of 1. In addition, your follow-up notes, including the groove apex, are still on the sixteenth-note rhythms of *e* and *a*. It's hard to believe you're still playing the same old tune as the one at the beginning of this chapter, isn't it?

You can prepare yourself for the dotted R & B/Soul groove skeleton by evenly counting *1 – e – and – a – 2 – e – and – uh* and tapping your hand against your thigh on 1 and on *a* and then not tapping on anything else. This gives you a good sense of the feel you're going for.

TRACK 78



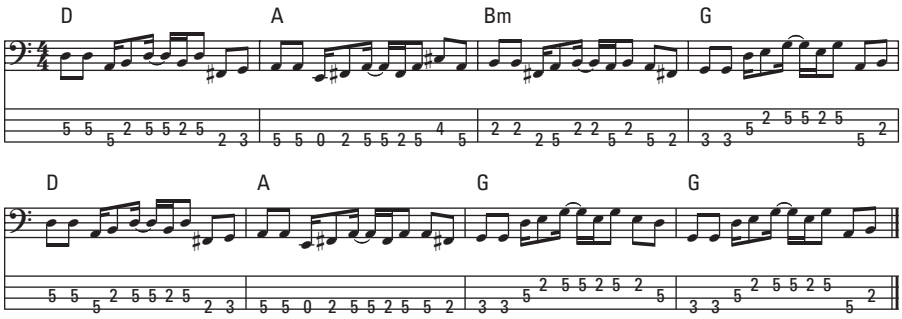


Figure 13-5: R & B/Soul bass part with a groove skeleton using two eighth notes.

ON THE CD

Take a peek at Figure 13-6 while you're listening to Track 79. And, by the way, do try to control that twitch in your foot that's letting you know you're really feelin' the groove.

Make sure you play the rhythm in the first two notes cleanly and crisply; it's a very particular feel that's not easy to catch right away. The trick is to make sure you complete this rhythmic phrase directly before beat 2 comes around.

TRACK 79

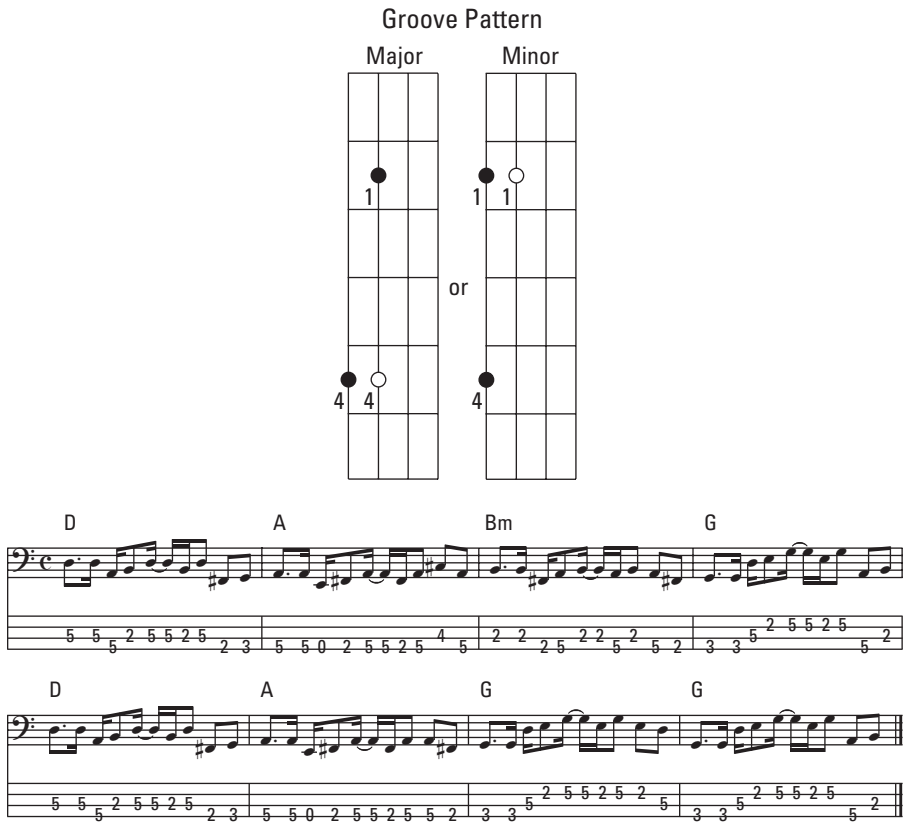


Figure 13-6: R & B/Soul bass part with a groove skeleton using a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note.

Feeling the funk

Bring on da funk! It's time to really get down. Funk is a genre that can be very busy or very sparse, but it's most definitely performed with a sixteenth-note feel. Signaling a funk groove with two sixteenth notes upfront as your groove skeleton leaves no doubt to anyone that your intentions are . . . funky! The notes following the groove skeleton are placed onto sixteenth-note rhythms, the *e* and *a* of any of the beats. Keep your notes short and crisp — no lingering allowed.

ON THE CD

It may help to pick up some outrageous sunglasses to get you into the mood, but don't put them on until after you've checked out Figure 13-7 for your typical funk groove. Track 80 sounds it out for you. Play along while donning your new shades.

TRACK 80

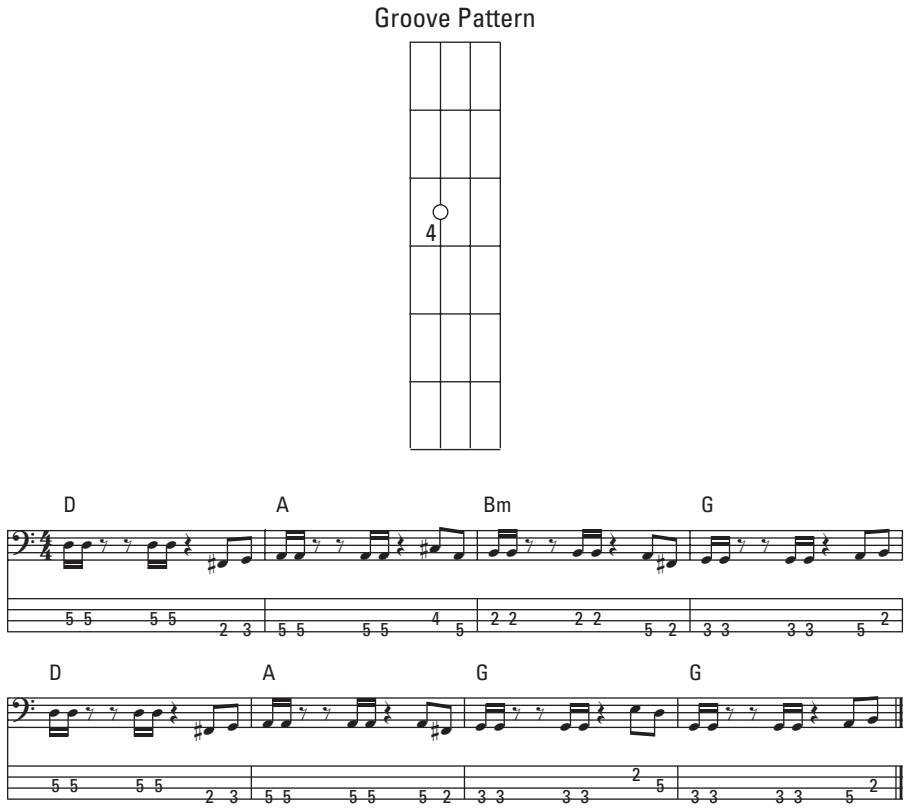


Figure 13-7: Funk bass part with a groove skeleton using two sixteenth notes.

Don't confuse funk with slap playing. Funk is a genre based on rhythm and harmony. Check out the *slap technique* (also called *thumb style*) in Chapter 10. Funk is often played with a slap technique, but it's just as often played using the index/middle finger technique (see Chapter 2). Familiarize yourself with each technique and then choose your preference on a case-by-case — or rather song-by-song — basis.

Layin' down some Latin grooves

Latin is one of the most easily recognizable world beats you can play on bass, and you won't have trouble finding people to play with. The standard groove for Latin is a predictable root-5 pattern (for more on roots and 5ths, check out Chapter 2), as shown in Figure 13-8.

Listen to Track 81 and you can instantly hear a bass groove you've probably heard hundreds of times before ("Girl From Ipanema," anyone?). The groove skeleton hits on beat 1 and the *and* of beat 2.

Be sure to leave lots of space in your groove to make room for the two dozen percussionists who want to play with you on the Latin stuff.

When you're feelin' blue, shuffle

The shuffle genre is most often expressed in the blues style. With only three subdivisions per beat (triplets) instead of four (sixteenth notes), the shuffle has a much more relaxed feel than, say, a funk style.

You can instantly recognize a shuffle by its lopsided feel — each beat is subdivided into three equal parts, with two parts assigned to the first note and the third part to the second note. The resulting rhythm is long-short, long-short, and so on (sort of like a drunkard limping back to his room after a bar brawl).

TRACK 81

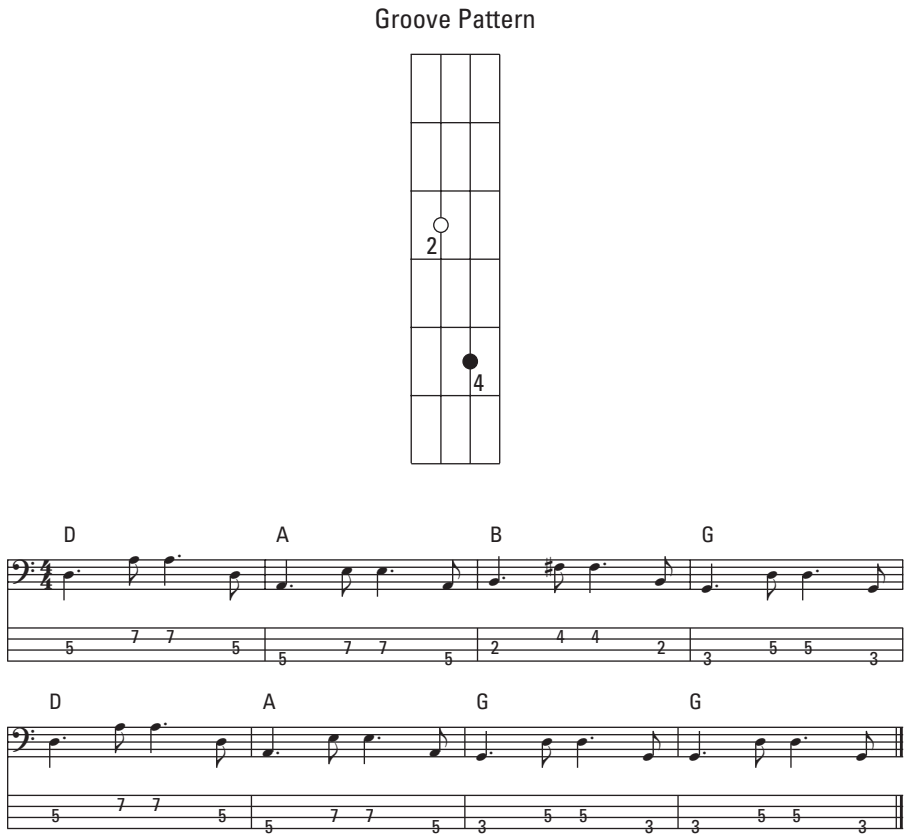


Figure 13-8: Latin bass groove.

ON THE CD

Figure 13-9 gives you the lowdown on the high art of the shuffle, using the same old tune that's used in all the other genres in this chapter, but boy oh boy, does the same old tune sound different as a shuffle. Check it out on Track 82. And if your lover (or dog) has left you alone and blue, feel free to play along.

TRACK 82

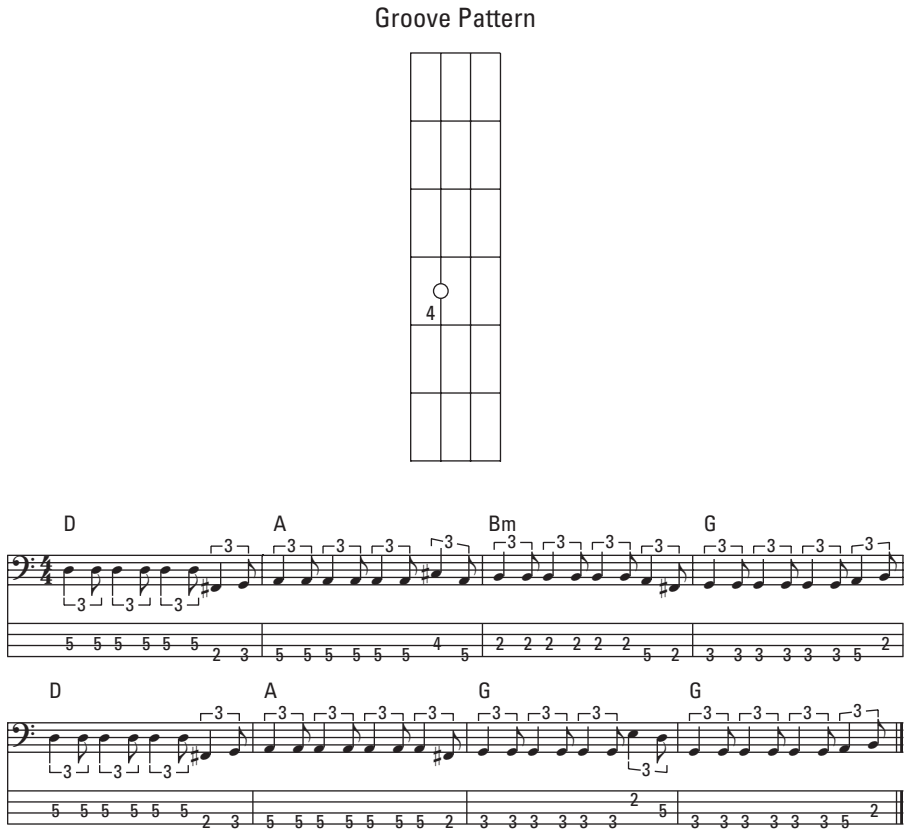


Figure 13-9: Shuffle bass part.

To Blend or Not to Blend: Knowing How to Fit In

Blending a bass line means choosing the notes you play so they support the song perfectly without being overly noticeable. It's almost like the hidden beams in the ceiling of a modern house — you don't see them, but if they weren't there, the roof would collapse.

A *bold groove,* on the other hand, has a much more obvious role in a tune. It's more akin to the exposed beams of an old colonial house. They too serve to hold up the roof, but they're very obvious and also ornamental. They're a major part of the aesthetics.

No matter what genre you're playing, being able to choose between blending unobtrusively into a song with your bass rumbling in support, or playing a bass line that's so distinct that you can't even imagine the song without it, is a powerful skill to have as a bass player. Grooves that blend and grooves that are bold both have their proper place in music, and both are equally respected when they're used appropriately. Here's the lowdown on when to use each of them:

- **Blending grooves:** You use a blending groove when you're playing a more supportive role in a song, when you're trying to stay out of the way of the vocals or a melody instrument, or when you're just not all that familiar with the particular song (or musicians you're playing with).

  Think of the song "Soul Man" (either the version by Sam & Dave or by the Blues Brothers — they're both played with Donald "Duck" Dunn on bass). The bass plays the perfectly complex yet unobtrusive groove. It blends so well that it's kind of difficult to think of what *exactly* the bass is doing.

- **Bold grooves:** Playing a bold groove thrusts you into a leadership position; you're leading the song, and your bass part has a much more authoritative and unyielding quality. This means, of course, that you have to be *very* familiar with the song.

  The Beatles' "Come Together" (with Paul McCartney on bass) is a perfect example of a bass line that really sticks out, creating a secondary melody to the song. It doesn't blend in at all.

The following sections give you the goods on how you can create both a bass line that blends into a song and one that doesn't blend at all.

Just blending in: How to do it

A blending bass groove is a favorite device of session bassists, who may play in hundreds of recording sessions per year. After all, this type of groove is the perfect vehicle to support a song without diverting attention from the melody and the words.

You can achieve the desired blending effect as a bass player by keeping your notes low. Yes, I know, it's kind of a no-brainer — it *is* a bass. What I mean is keeping the notes you use to flesh out the groove *below* the root of the groove skeleton (see Chapter 6 for a definition of the groove skeleton). In other words, after you establish the groove skeleton, play the follow-up notes *lower* than the root instead of higher.

ON THE CD

Take a look at Figure 13-10 to see how the notes for the blending groove on Track 83 are positioned. The root of the chord is the highest note and then the groove dips, only to emerge again at the root for the beginning of another round of the groove.

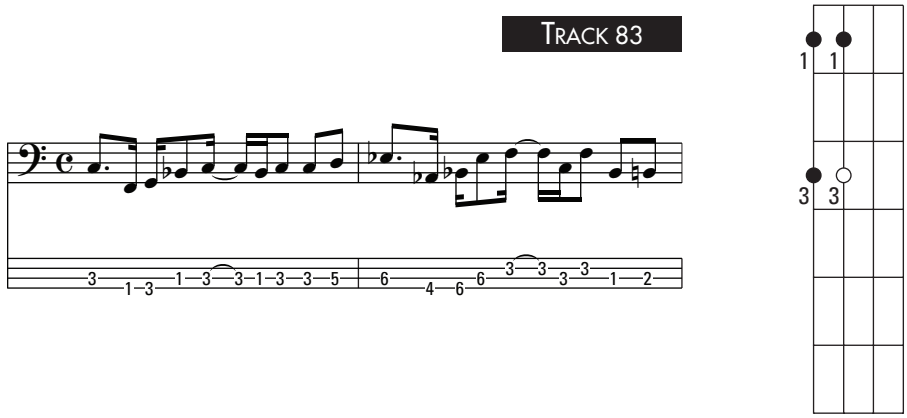


Figure 13-10: A blending groove.

The bold and the beautiful: Creating a bold groove

When you want to capture the ear of your audience, create a bold groove by choosing a sequence of notes that rise. Let your notes soar upwards. In other words, after you establish the groove skeleton, play the follow-up notes *higher* than the root instead of lower.

When you choose to create a bold groove, it's usually a good idea to settle on a firm, repetitive groove and to pick notes that complement the melody. Your upper notes are much closer to the range of the melody and can easily clash if they aren't part of the same chord (check out Chapter 5 to make sure they are).

Take a look at Figure 13-11 to see how to create a bold groove; notice that the notes after the groove skeleton are going higher. Listen to Track 84 to hear the impact of this groove.

TRACK 84

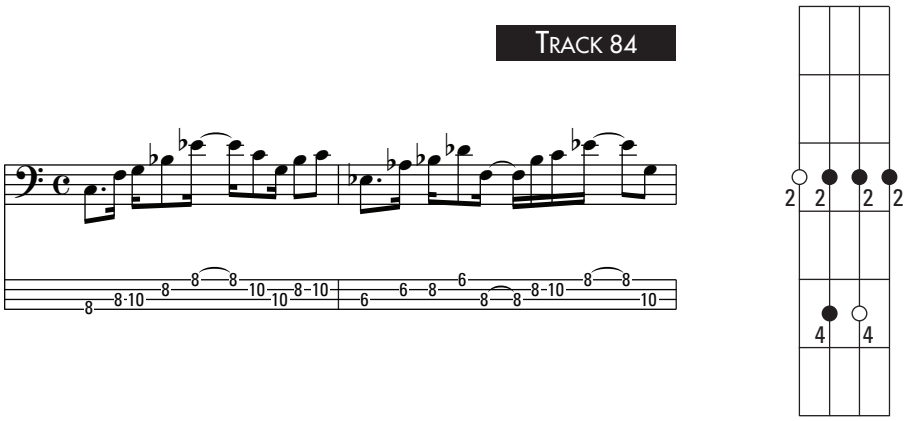


Figure 13-11: Bold groove.

Blending and bolding by genre

The choice of using a blending groove versus a bold groove falls squarely on *your* shoulders as the bass player. You're the one to choose which kind of groove to go for, but you don't want to use them arbitrarily. You need to follow certain broad guidelines, and as you gain experience you develop an ear for what's needed. Both types of grooves work in all genres.

Rock, for example, may call for either a blending or a bold groove, depending on the particular style of the tune. For instance, a pop style (singer-songwriter) usually needs a blending groove, because the words need to be understood. A progressive rock tune, on the other hand, is much more likely to sport a bold groove. Both styles are part of the rock genre, but call for very different groove types.

In other cases, the choice between using a blending versus a bold groove is even more subjective. Take R & B/Soul for instance. Some songs have a

busy but blending bass groove (the Temptations' "Cloud Nine" is an excellent example), while others have an equally busy but bold groove (the Four Tops' "Bernadette" comes to mind). Both songs are part of the same genre (R & B/Soul) and even the same style (Motown), yet one has a blending groove whereas the other groove is bold. As you gain more experience in playing bass, the choice between whether to use a blending or a bold groove becomes easier.

Signing off with a flourish

Putting your own stamp on a groove is just like writing a letter. In a letter, you take care of all the important points you need to cover and then sign it at the end. It's the same with bass grooves.

A sign-off is usually in contrast to the rest of the grooves in a phrase and signals that a large four- or eight-bar phrase is about to be completed. Some musicians refer to this as a *turnaround.* This is your flourish, your personal signature. You use this element to alert the other players and the listeners that you're about to start a new phrase (for an explanation of phrases, check out Chapter 3).

You can sometimes tell who the bass player is by listening to his or her signature at the end of a phrase. Jaco Pastorius, for example, signs off very differently than Paul McCartney, and Donald "Duck" Dunn does it quite differently than Pino Palladino.

REMEMBER

Go ahead and take some liberties at the end of a phrase; after all, it's *your* signature. Just make sure you're back in time for the beginning of the next phrase.

Take a look at Figure 13-12 for some cool sign-offs and listen to Track 85 to hear them implemented at the end of each four-bar phrase.

TRACK 85

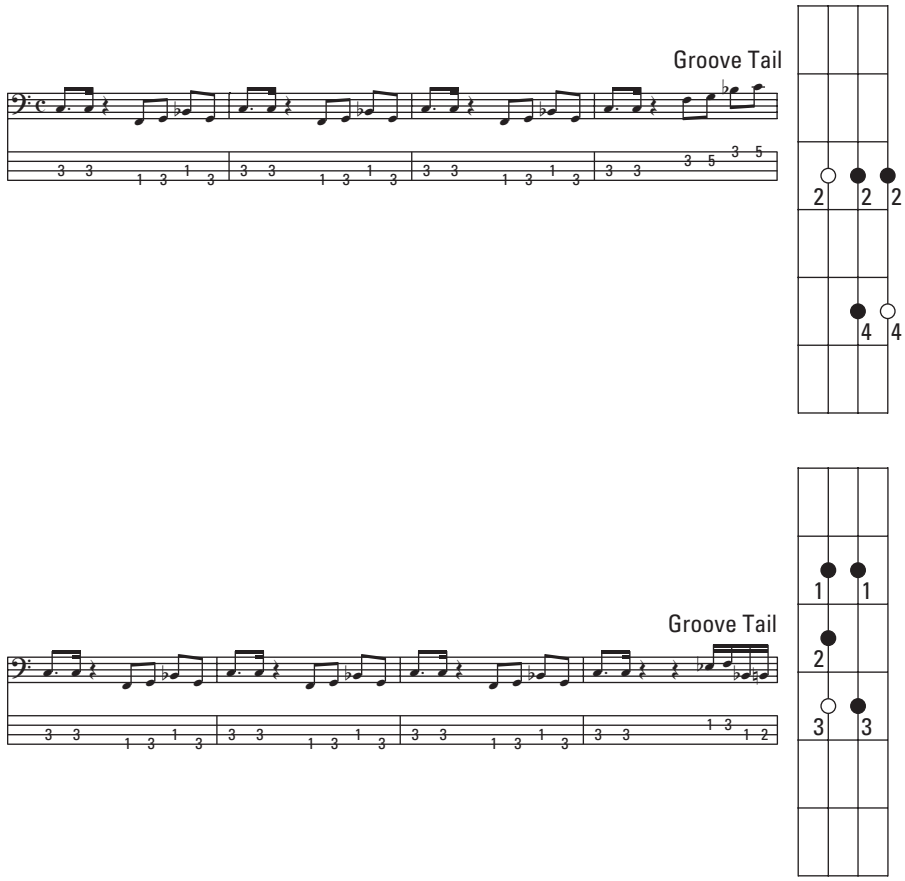


Figure 13-12: Sign-offs, or turn-arounds, for a groove.

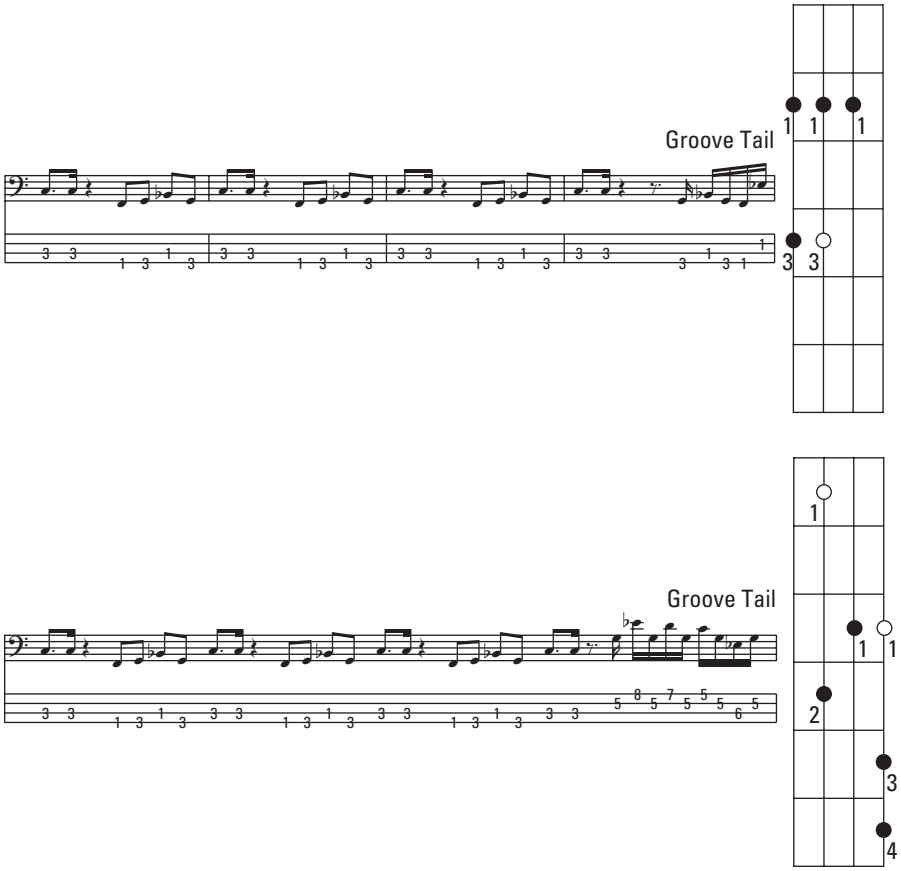


Figure 13-12: (continued)

Part V

Buying and Caring For Your Bass

"Gee thanks, but I don't think a gingham neck cozy and peg board bonnet really goes with the rest of my guitar."

In this part . . .

When you're ready to lay your hard-earned cash on the line, don't leave home without this part. Chapter 14 shows you how to choose the right bass, and Chapter 15 helps you pick out whatever other gear you may need to fulfill all your bass-ic needs.

And while your new bass may seem rugged and nearly indestructible, it does have a soft side that cries out for your attention. So this part also gives you all the information you need to ensure that your bass has a long and happy life. Chapter 16 shows how to change your strings, and Chapter 17 explains how to perform basic maintenance and setups to keep both you and your bass happy.

Chapter 14

Love of a Lifetime or One-Night Stand? Buying the Right Bass

In This Chapter

- Identifying your bass-ic needs and wants
- Keeping an eye on your budget
- Shopping for your bass
- Commissioning a bass from a luthier

Buying a bass guitar is an exciting and rewarding experience, but it also can be a bit scary. You're about to commit a lot of hard-earned cash to the purchase of your bass. You're also about to commit yourself to becoming a true bassist. Instead of borrowing a friend's instrument or renting one from a local music store, you're now getting your very own personal bass guitar.

Buying the right bass is a personal choice that only you can make; it's also a choice that you can only make every once in a while (unless you're independently wealthy), so choose wisely. This chapter helps you make the tough decisions when buying a new bass guitar. It also prepares you to step bravely into that music store as a bass player who knows exactly what to look for.

Assessing Your Needs Before You Buy

The single most important question to ask yourself before buying a bass is: "What do I want in a bass?" The following are some key points to consider when choosing your new instrument:

- **Feel:** The bass needs to feel good to you. Actually, it needs to feel good to your hands. You don't have to be an expert to determine whether a bass is right for you. Just pick it up and play a few notes. If the bass responds to your touch and doesn't feel awkward or stiff, it's a good candidate. Play lots of different basses when you shop so you have some

way of comparing the different models. Play a high-end (expensive) model for comparison as well. (Those $5,500 basses usually feel *very* good.) And then see whether you can find a less expensive model that feels similar (or just buy the $5,500 one).

- **Sound:** The bass needs to sound good to you and to the people you play with. (Of course, you can always find other people to play with.) It needs to have a clear, clean *bottom end* (low frequencies — what did you think the term meant?) If you want to alter the tone of the bass and dirty it up — fine. But make sure that you start out with a clean tone.
- **Looks:** Looks are a distant third behind feel and sound. I had a bass that played like a dream and sounded like Thor (the god of thunder) himself had come down from the heavens . . . and it had the most obnoxious purple finish on the body, with grass-green silk windings on the strings to top it off. I was happy to buy it. (I used it mostly for recording, where nobody would see me.) Don't sacrifice tone or playability for looks. You can always have the bass refinished. Of course, if possible, pick a bass you also enjoy looking at (or rather, you enjoy being seen with).

REMEMBER

Here's a really good piece of advice: Don't settle. If you find a bass that sounds great but doesn't feel good in your hands, don't buy it. If you find a bass that feels wonderful but sounds like a buzz saw, don't buy it. You *can* have the best of both worlds; you just have to look hard for it.

Also, keep in mind that bass guitars are flexible instruments. You can play your bass during the afternoon jazz cocktail hour at the local cafe before rushing off with it to play the rock 'n' roll set at the local pub in the evening. Then you can get up the next morning and use the same bass to record a country song at the studio. So set your buying priorities without worrying about what style of music you want to play.

Thinking long-term: Moving in together

Some fledgling bassists feel that they have to *earn* that special bass. In other words, before buying their dream bass, they feel that they need to deserve it. Don't buy into that line of thinking. You only need to determine whether your level of commitment is strong enough, and nobody knows that better than you. If you're convinced that you're going to be playing bass for the rest of your life, or at least for the next few years or so, get the best bass you can afford (as long as it fulfills the criteria I explain earlier in the chapter). A great bass encourages you to play more, which in turn makes you a better player.

TIP

In the long run, buying a good instrument right from the start is more cost-effective than constantly trading in mediocre instruments without ever buying the one you really want. Every time you trade in a used bass, you lose money. Make your bass yours, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health.

Thinking short-term: Help me make it through the night

If you aren't sure that you want to be a bassist, or if you're just temporarily filling the bass chair for a band, go for a bass that feels good and has a good tone (and, yes, there's a difference between good and great), but don't break your bank account.

You can choose from a wide variety of bass guitars in the economy price range, and some of them are quite good. If you find that bass playing is growing on you, you can always get a better one later and keep the first one as a backup.

How many strings are too many?

Today's bassists face a variety of choices when selecting a bass. Not only do you have a huge selection of brand names to consider, you also have to decide whether to buy a traditional four-string bass or go for the extended range of a five-string bass, six-string bass, or beyond.

In the mid-1970s, Anthony Jackson — a top New York City session player best known for his work with Steely Dan, Chaka Khan, and Paul Simon — conceived of, and had luthier Carl Thompson build, a six-string contrabass guitar with an extra high string and an extra low string. Soon after, other players saw his design and adapted the idea of adding a lower fifth string to compete with the extra low sounds of the keyboard bass on records. (After all, nobody plays better bass than a bassist.) The resulting five- and six-string configurations allow bassists to gain access to the low notes for groovy, synth-like (or synthesizer-like) bass lines, the high notes for clearer soloing and filling, and everything in between. Take a look at Figure 14-1 for some exotic six-string basses.

To determine how many strings your bass guitar should have for the style of music you want to play, figure out whether you need to venture into the extreme low and high registers frequently. If you play a lot of dance or hip-hop, a five-string bass with its extra low string may be right for you. If you want to get into fusion jazz, a six-string bass may be the answer for extensive soloing on the high string. However, a four-string bass can fulfill the bass function just as well for any genre. So, like most of the other items on your shopping list, the number of strings becomes a question of personal preference.

REMEMBER

Because the strings on five- and six-string basses are set up to have the same relation tonally to each other as the strings on the four-string bass, all the fingering grids in this book work for them as well.

Figure 14-1: From left to right: A fretted six-string bass, a fretless six-string bass, and a fretless six-string bass with inlaid frets.

To fret or not to fret

Fretless basses, which have no frets on the fingerboard, have a distinctive sound (sort of a growl). When you play a fretless bass, you press the string directly onto the wood, just as you would on an upright, or double, bass. In place of the frets, the neck has *markers* either on the top, where the frets would be, or on the side of the fingerboard.

TIP

If you're just beginning to play and you're buying your first bass, I advise you not to get a fretless bass. A fretted bass is easier to play in tune; the frets cut off your string precisely at the correct note, whereas on a fretless bass your fingers are responsible for finding the correct intonation. You may consider a fretless bass as your second bass when you reach the intermediate level or beyond. You may even want to use a fretless bass as your primary instrument after you become a more seasoned player.

Listen to recordings by Jaco Pastorius and Pino Palladino to hear masterful use of the fretless bass. You can read more about Pastorius in Chapter 18.

Needs Are One Thing . . . Budget Is Quite Another

You need to decide how much money you can afford to spend on a bass so that you still have some left for an amp, a cable, and a few other essentials (which are discussed in Chapter 15). You can certainly play a bass guitar without an amp — you just won't be able to hear it . . . and neither will anyone else.

If you feel that your commitment level is strong, buy a bass that can keep up with you throughout your playing career. Such an instrument will cost anywhere from about $700 to . . . well, the sky's the limit. If you're just starting out and aren't sure whether bass playing is for you — Are you serious? *Of course* it's for you! — you can get package deals that include a bass guitar and an amp for about $400. Beginner basses start at just under $200.

The lower your budget, the more important it is for you to try out several basses of the same brand before you settle on one. The quality is inconsistent, even within the same brand, in the lower price ranges. Some instruments may fall apart fairly quickly, and others may last for years and sound and feel great.

Checking out magazines, such as *Bass Player* and *Bassics,* for articles that review and compare the quality of various basses is a good idea. You also can find reviews on bass Web sites like TalkBass.com and ActiveBass.com. And plan to play a lot of basses before deciding which one to purchase. You may get lucky and find a diamond in the rough.

A Trip to the Bass-Mint: Where to Shop for Your Bass Guitar

You can get your perfect bass from many different sources, be it large music stores, small mom and pop shops, retiring musician friends, or bass-playing tenants who left in a hurry. In this section, I provide some ideas to help make your search fruitful and time efficient.

Buying a bass is best done over the course of several days. This time frame allows you to compare different basses and their prices, and it also keeps you from falling prey to impulsive shopping. This decision may well change your life, so take your time.

Hitting the music stores

Visiting the biggest music store in your area, where you can look at (and listen to) the most basses in one place, is the best way to start your search. You can check out the small music stores after you've settled on a bass. You may want to bring a friend who can listen objectively and provide moral support. If this friend knows more about basses than you do, that's even better. Just remember, *you're* the one who's going to play it, so make sure you choose what's best for you.

When you come face to face with a salesperson, tell her that you're looking for a bass guitar and that you'd like to try a few. Ask to check out a Fender Precision and a Fender Jazz. These basses are considered the standards for comparison. They sound great for any style of music, they look great, and they're real workhorses, too. If you can afford them, stick with the Fender basses made in America; their quality is better than the quality of the imported models. Even if these basses are beyond your present budget, they give you a standard to compare other prospective basses to.

The salesperson is going to ask you what you're looking to spend, so come in knowing your budget. Also, prepare yourself to walk out of the store bassless (leave your wallet at home if you have to). Before you plunk down all your savings from the past six months, you still have work to do. This first trip is your intelligence-gathering mission. You're trying to get an idea of which bass feels and sounds best to you.

When you're ready to try out a new bass, first give it a once-over. Check to see whether the finish is even and all the seams are tight (especially where the neck joins the body). Also make sure the strings are evenly spaced on the fingerboard: The G string should be about the same distance from the edge of the fingerboard as the E string is, and all the strings should be about the same distance from each other. Take a look at Figure 14-2 to see evenly spaced strings on a fingerboard.

When you have the bass guitar in your hands, check to see whether the neck is securely attached to the body of the instrument. The neck can be attached to the body in one of three ways:

- **Bolt-on:** The neck is screwed onto the body with large screws.
- **Set-in (or glued-in):** The neck is seamlessly glued into the body.
- **Neck-through:** The neck continues through the entire body of the bass, and the body wings are glued to the sides of the neck piece.

Figure 14-2: Evenly spaced strings on a fingerboard.

If the neck is bolted on, be sure that the neck doesn't shift when you move it from side to side. (Don't try to break it; just push and pull it lightly.) The neck and the body need to be solidly joined.

After you determine whether the bass is solid, ask the salesperson whether you can plug the bass into the best bass amp in the store to get the truest response from the instrument. Tune up the bass (see Chapter 2) and start playing. Play every fret on every string so you can make sure the frets don't have high spots that make the strings buzz.

Next, play some music. If you've been practicing the grooves from Part IV of this book on a friend's bass, see what it feels like to play some of them on the new bass. If bass playing is new to you, just play a few notes and listen to the sound. Do you like it? Does it feel good? When you finish testing the bass, move on to the next one. After you try all the basses in your price range (and maybe some that are beyond your price range), thank the salesperson and leave. Make sure you know which models you like best and what they cost.

Try to resist the urge to buy a bass during your first trip to the store. You should take all the information you gather and mull it over carefully before deciding which bass to buy. You may want to search out some other stores to see what they have available.

Consulting newspaper ads

After doing some testing and research in your favorite music store, you can check the classified ads in your local paper to see whether someone is selling the bass model you're looking for. As a general rule, newspaper ads state a price that leaves some wiggle room, so you may want to negotiate to get the price down. Even if you can afford the stated price, negotiating gives you more cash for buying your amp.

Be very careful to meet the seller, try out the bass, and make sure all the parts are working before kissing your hard-earned money goodbye. Unlike a store, no guarantees are offered when buying a bass through a classified ad. However, you may find an excellent instrument at a very reasonable price.

Visiting online shops and individual online ads

Thanks to the Internet, you can be in Seattle reading about a very cool bass that's patiently waiting in southern Florida for someone just like you. However, I advise you not to buy a bass on the Internet without trying the model in a local store first.

When you have a pretty good idea which bass feels and sounds good in the store, you can concentrate on that model when you shop online. Get prices from the online stores and see whether your local music store can beat them. If you feel comfortable buying your bass online, and you can get a significantly better price, go for it. Make sure you can return the bass if it isn't as good as the one in the store.

Sometimes getting a *service agreement* (which you can only get when you buy from a store) for your bass is worth paying a little extra money. With a service agreement, the store's technician will set up your bass for free every six months or so. (A *set-up* for your bass is the equivalent of a tune-up for your car.)

Some online stores and bass Web sites also have classified sections where individuals can sell used or new basses. Individual online ads really aren't much different from newspaper ads; the only difference is that they cover a

much vaster geography than newspaper ads. To protect yourself, you should do the following before buying from an individual who posts an online ad:

- Make sure the seller is reputable (many online sites rate their sellers).
- Don't buy anything from anyone who gives you a bad feeling. For instance, you should steer clear if someone says "I'll ship you this bass while your check is on the way . . . Oh, and could you make it out for a little more to round the number off? I'll send you the change in cash."
- Stick with the better-known sites, such as eBay.com. They have a system in place to minimize the possibility of fraud. Reputable bass Web sites that have "for sale" sections include `www.activebass.com` and `www.talkbass.com`.
- Make sure you contact the individual who's selling the bass *before* you buy. A phone number is a must! You need to know that this person actually exists.

When Money Is No Object: Getting a Custom-Made Bass

If you have enough money at your disposal to go to a *luthier* (a stringed-instrument maker), that's a great route to take. A luthier can make an instrument especially for you. You need to tell him what styles of music you like to play (even if the answer is "all of it"), how many strings you need, and whether you want to go fretless or fretted. (See "Assessing Your Needs Before You Buy," earlier in the chapter, for more information.)

When you hire a luthier, you also can pick the color of your bass. However, because the wood on custom-made instruments is usually so good, you may just want to go with the natural finish. (After all, you don't spray paint a Rolls Royce.) The rest is best left to the luthier. He knows which wood types will sound best for the bass you desire.

REMEMBER

You may have to wait a while until your bass is ready (usually between six months to three years), but let me tell you, the wait is well worth it. A custom-made instrument is one for a lifetime (and beyond), and meeting someone who's as passionate about building a bass guitar as you are about playing it is a wonderful experience.

Buying a bass comes down to this: What feels good to you? When you buy a bass, you build a relationship, so make it a good one.

Chapter 15

Getting the Right Gear for Your Bass Guitar

In This Chapter

- Amplifying your bass
- Outfitting your bass

Most bass guitars have a solid body. Unlike instruments that have a hollow body, which acts as a *resonating chamber* (a cavity that resonates when notes are played, thus making the notes audible), solid-body instruments are simply inaudible without amplification. And because the notes that bassists play are so low, they need a good amount of amplification.

To share your bass grooves with the world — or even with the person right next to you — your bass guitar needs to be connected to an amplifier. So you need to take a trip to the music store to buy one — and while you're there, you may as well pick up a few other items for your permanent bass arsenal.

This chapter tells you exactly what you need to get to be a fully functional bassist who's ready for any playing situation. So take this book with you when you head out to the music store . . . and don't forget your wallet.

Making Yourself Heard: A Primer on Amplifiers and Speakers

The *amplifier* (or *amp* for short) is the unit that boosts the electronic signal of your bass and sends it to the *speaker,* which takes the signal and converts it into sound. The speaker is just as important as the amp. In fact, if you don't have a speaker attached to the amp, nobody will be able to hear you.

Guitarists can start out with a little 15-watt practice amp, but bassists don't have this option, because low notes require a lot more power than high notes. So you need to practice a little fiscal irresponsibility when purchasing your amp: You need to spring for a larger, more expensive one.

Full-meal deal or à la carte: Combo or separate amp and speaker

You can amplify your bass in two basic ways:

- **With a separate amp and speaker:** The amp and speaker come as two separate units and are connected via a *speaker cable.* The advantage of buying separate units is that you can get an amplifier from a company known for making good-quality amps and a speaker from one that specializes in speakers. Additionally, the separate amp and speaker are more powerful, and they allow you to mix and match different amps and speakers.
- **With a combo amp:** A *combo amp* houses both the speaker and the amplifier in one unit, eliminating your need for a separate speaker. The combo amp is more portable than a separate amp and speaker. (You need to carry only one piece as opposed to two.)

Take a look at Figure 15-1 for an example of a combo amp and of a separate amp and speaker.

Figure 15-1: A combo amp (left) and a separate amp and speaker (right).

I recommend that you start with a combo amp that has between 50 and 100 watts of power (it'll run you anywhere from $200 to $1,000). That's enough for practicing at home, rehearsing in the garage (get the car out first), and playing at the local pub. (Hint: Madison Square Garden is *not* a local pub, even if you live in New York City.) If you start playing at bigger venues — parties and weddings, for example — go for a performance amp and speaker with at least 300 watts. Yes, they're pricey (from $400 to $2,500 and beyond), but they're well worth it. You want to feel the rumble, don't you?

Opting for solid state or tubes

When buying an amplifier, you have a choice between solid state and tube amplification. Here's the lowdown on each:

- *Solid state amplification* refers to technology that uses transistors and/or microchips for amplification.
- *Tube amplification* refers to technology that uses vacuum tubes for amplification (like the red, glowing tubes in the backs of old radios).

Selecting between solid state amplification and tube amplification is a personal choice, although some people swear by one or the other. Try several different amps (using *your* bass) at a music store to see which sound you prefer; you'll notice a subtle difference between the two.

If you don't have a strong preference for either solid state amps or tube amps, go for the solid state amp. It's usually less expensive for comparable power and quality, and it requires less maintenance. (A tube amp needs to have its tubes replaced every couple of years.)

Picking a speaker size

Amplifiers have a variety of speaker sizes, whether you're buying a separate speaker or a combo amp. Bass speakers that are 10 or 15 inches in diameter are best. Some speaker cabinets have a combination of different speakers as well. For example, the cabinet may have a 15-inch and a 10-inch speaker in the same enclosure.

The larger the speaker, the more boom you hear in the sound; the smaller the speaker, the clearer the tone (but with less of the bass sound). Try different speakers with your bass to find out which one you prefer. You may want to start out with a 15-inch speaker and eventually graduate to a cabinet that

has four 10-inch speakers. (Or you may want to go with the Grateful Dead's famous "wall of sound," which is several stories tall.) Just remember that you're the one who has to move all this equipment; you probably won't be able to count on your singer for help.

Setting the tone

Every amp has a control panel (see Figure 15-2) with a few knobs for adjusting the sound. These control panels are usually similar from amp to amp. Here's a quick rundown on what the knobs are used for:

- **Volume:** This knob raises or lowers the volume of your bass.
- **Bass:** This knob raises or lowers the low tones (frequencies) of your bass. If you don't have enough bass, the tone will sound tinny and weak; if you have too much bass, the tone will sound boomy and undefined.
- **Mid:** This knob adjusts the midrange tone. If you don't have enough midrange, the tone will sound undefined; if you have too much midrange, the tone will honk (not a pleasant sound). Sometimes amps have one knob for *high* mid and another for *low* mid.
- **Treble:** This knob adjusts the high tone. If you don't have enough high, the tone will sound dull; if you have too much high, the tone will sound piercing.

Figure 15-2: The control panel of a bass amplifier.

REMEMBER

Experiment with different settings, and keep in mind that you have to readjust your settings to compensate for the unique acoustical qualities of the room in which you're playing. Be sure to listen carefully to your sound during the sound check.

Needs, Wants, and Nonessentials: Rounding Out Your Equipment

Certain items are required for your career as a bass player; they simply come with the territory. Other items can make your life a lot easier if you have them. Finally, some items are just the icing on the cake; you won't miss a performance if you don't have them. This section covers these three types of equipment.

You can complete your arsenal at any time, but the essentials, along with the amp and speaker, are, well, essential. Fortunately, the essentials don't wear out very quickly, so you'll have them for years and years of joyful bass playing.

Must-haves: Cases, gig bags, and more

You need to be able to transport your bass safely from place to place, and you may have to do this during a blazing heat wave, a tropical monsoon, or a snowstorm. (For example, I recorded part of the CD for this book in New York City during one of the biggest blizzards of the year; the basses were safely in their cases while I was slogging through the storm on the way to the studio.) Two types of cases — hard-shell cases and soft-sided gig bags — give your bass ample protection.

Most basses come with a hard-shell case to protect it from the elements as well as from anyone bumping into it. A hard case is great for traveling as other bags and suitcases may end up loaded on top of your precious bass.

If you live in a city and take public transportation, or you walk a lot, you may want to carry your bass in a gig bag. A *gig bag* is a soft case that protects your instrument from the elements but doesn't offer a lot of protection from people (or vehicles) bumping into it. However, hauling your bass in a gig bag is a lot easier than toting your bass around in a hard case: You carry a gig bag like a backpack, leaving your hands free to sign autographs for your adoring fans.

Whether you go for a hard case or a gig bag, you need to put several other items in the carrying case (along with your bass). The items you need to carry with you are

- **Cable:** You need a cable for connecting your bass to the amp. Without a cable, the best amp in the world won't be able to give you any sound.
- **Strap:** A strap helps you hold your bass while you're playing. The only other way to hold your bass in the proper position is to glue it to your belly. Ouch!

- **Electronic tuner:** An electronic tuner helps you tune your bass, especially in a noisy environment. You also may want to carry extra batteries and a tuning fork in case the batteries in your electronic tuner give out. (See Chapter 2 for more information about tuning.)
- **Extra set of strings:** Bass strings rarely break. But if they do break in the middle of a performance, you want to be ready. (Refer to Chapter 16 for details about changing strings.)
- **Rubbing alcohol and cleaning cloth:** You want to keep your strings nice and bright, don't you? (Chapter 17 provides a discussion on cleaning your bass.)
- **Wrenches and screwdrivers:** Put together a toolkit with anything to help you fix your bass when you're in a bind. However, if the problem is beyond the light repair discussed in Chapter 17, let a professional instrument repairperson handle it.
- **Metronome:** You may want to take your metronome, in case you get a chance to practice when you're traveling. Even if you don't bring your metronome, make sure that you own one.

Figure 15-3 shows the contents that should be included in your case or gig bag.

Figure 15-3: Contents of a bass bag.

Definite maybes: Useful effects, gadgets, and practice items

Some items make your life as a bass player easier (and sometimes more fun), but you often can function without them. I talk about these items in this section.

Bassists generally prefer a clean sound, so they aren't as likely as guitar players to use all kinds of *effects* (gadgets that alter the sound). However, two useful effects items that bassists do often use are

- **A chorus unit:** A *chorus unit* makes your bass sound like two basses being played together.
- **A volume pedal:** A *volume pedal* lets you adjust the volume with your foot, even in the middle of a tune.

Figure 15-4 shows these items.

Figure 15-4: A chorus unit and a volume pedal.

For those long hours of practicing, you also may find the following items useful:

- A stool for proper posture while playing
- A music stand to hold your charts (or this book)
- A stand for your bass

Figure 15-5 is a picture of these items.

Figure 15-5: A bass stand, a stool, and a music stand.

TIP

If you still have some cash to burn, get a good *headphone amp* (an amp that allows you to hear your bass over headphones). Figure 15-6 shows a headphone amp. With one of these, you can play at all hours of the day or night without disturbing anyone. A wide variety of headphone amps are available, ranging in price from $30 to $300. The better the unit, the better your sound — and the more you'll want to practice.

Figure 15-6: A professional headphone practice amp.

You can find most of the items in this section at any large music store. You may have to buy the stool from a furniture store and the headphone amp via an online store, but the really large music stores usually have everything you need.

Extras: Effects pedals

As a bass player, your job is to hold down the groove and keep the sound of the band tight, and that's best accomplished with a clean sound from the bass. But for a little special effect during a bass groove or solo, you may want to audition some other pedals besides the chorus unit and the volume pedal (both are described in the previous section). Here are some examples of other effects pedals you may want to use:

- **Flanger/phase shifter:** These devices create a whooshy, swirly sound, similar to the Hammond organ.
- **Digital delay:** This device creates an echo of the notes you play. You also can use the digital delay unit to record a short, rhythmic phrase that repeats as you play over it.
- **Distortion:** This device distorts your sound, making it rough and dirty. Distortion is mostly used for guitars, but basses can use it too. This device is great for hard-rock tunes.
- **Envelope filter:** This device makes your bass sound like a funky keyboard bass. It makes it sound as though a synthesizer is playing the bass part.

- **Octave pedal:** This device doubles your bass notes (either an octave above the note you're playing or an octave below).
- **Multi-effects unit:** A multi-effects unit is an all-in-one effects unit. It can be programmed to alter your bass sound in several ways at the touch of a foot pedal. Keep in mind, though, that a unit like this requires a lot of homework on your part. You have to find sounds you like, program them, and see how they work when you're playing in a band. You may find some cool sounds along the way. Just don't get carried away; you're the *bass* player, not the *guitar* player.

You can get these items at most large and small music stores, or you can order them online or through mail-order companies.

Chapter 16

Changing the Strings on Your Bass Guitar

In This Chapter

- Removing old or damaged strings
- Attaching new strings
- Keeping your new strings in good condition

"What kind of strings do you use?"

"I dunno. They came with the bass."

Some bassists think that you don't need to change the strings on a bass until they unravel — and then you only need to replace them if you absolutely need that particular string. If this were true, you'd be waiting a long time to change your strings, and eventually the only sound you'd get out of your poor old strings would be a dull thud.

The fact is, bass strings need to be changed regularly. The dirt from your fingers and the dust particles from the air wear them out. In addition, they get metal fatigue from being under constant tension. (Hey, come on! Don't *you* get fatigued when you're under constant tension?) Old strings lose their *brightness* (clarity of sound) and *sustain* (length of time that a note rings out), get sticky, and become difficult or even impossible to tune. So in this chapter, I lead you step by step through the painless process of changing the strings on your bass.

REMEMBER

Always replace all your strings at the same time. The strings wear at the same rate. So when you replace them all simultaneously, you ensure that they all sound the same; in other words, you ensure that one doesn't sound clearer than the others.

Knowing When It's Time to Say Goodbye

How do you know when it's time to replace your strings? Here are some clues that signal a change is necessary:

- **The strings show wear and tear.** You can see dark spots along the strings, probably as a result of dirt stuck in the windings of the steel. You also may see corrosion (or rust spots) on the strings.
- **The strings sound dull and lifeless.** Your notes don't *sustain* (ring out for an extended length of time), and hearing an exact pitch is difficult. Playing a harmonic for tuning also is a challenge. (See Chapter 2 for more on tuning with harmonics.)
- **The strings feel sticky and stiff.** Unless you ate a cinnamon roll before playing your bass, this is a sure sign of trouble. (Like with swimming, you should always wait at least a half-hour to play bass after eating a cinnamon roll.)
- **Jimmy Carter was president when you last changed your strings, or you just can't remember *when* you last changed them.** In other words, if you've lost count of how many decades it has been since you've changed your strings, do it *now!*

Off with the Old: Removing Bass Strings

Before you can put new strings on your bass, you need to remove the old ones. The quickest way to remove your old bass strings is to simply take wire cutters (sturdy ones; bass strings are pretty thick) and cut the string at the thin section between the *tuning post* (the round metal post connected to a tuning head that has one end of the string wound around it) and the *nut* (the little bar near the tuning posts that has a groove for each string; see Chapter 1).

If you're afraid that the string is going to whip across your face and leave a scar (imagine trying to explain that one), you can turn the tuning head to loosen the tension of the string before you cut it. Just remember which string is connected to which tuning post. After cutting the string, pull the coiled part off the tuning post, and then pull the other part through the bridge. Take a look at Figure 16-1 to see what this process looks like.

TIP

If you want to save your strings as an emergency set (in case one of the new strings breaks), don't cut the string. Just release the tension until you can grab the coiled end and pull it off the tuning post. Straighten the end of the string as best you can, and then pull the entire length through the bridge (see Figure 16-2).

Figure 16-1: Cutting the string and pulling the coiled part from the tuning post.

Figure 16-2: Pulling the string through the bridge.

One common myth says that you should change only one string at a time in order to maintain tension in the neck. I disagree. Take 'em off. Take 'em all off. Your bass can handle it, and removing all the strings at once gives you access to your fingerboard and pickups for some basic cleaning. (See Chapter 17 for info on how to clean your bass.)

On with the New: Restringing Your Bass

After you clip the old strings and clean any grime off the fingerboard, you renew the voice of your bass by adding brand-new strings. You need to be in a clean and comfortable environment for this task. After all, why put on new strings if you're going to get sawdust all over them as soon as you're done? Be sure to lay your bass on a clean towel before you restring it.

Have wire cutters nearby when you restring your bass. You'll need to cut the new strings down to size.

You attach strings to your bass at two points:

- At the bridge
- At the tuning posts

New strings are usually coiled in envelopes. The envelopes are numbered according to string size (the thickest string has the highest number). With most basses, the new string has to be pulled through a hole in the bridge, so that's the place to start. Here's a step-by-step guide to changing the strings of your bass guitar:

1. **Put a towel on the floor in front of you and lay the bass on it, with the neck pointing to the left (to the right if you're left-handed).**
2. **Remove the old strings.**

   See the previous section for instructions on how to remove the old strings.
3. **Take the thickest string out of its envelope (make sure you leave the string coiled) and take a look at it.**

   Notice that it has a ring (called a *ball*) at one end; the other end is pointed, with its tip wrapped in silk. Figure 16-3 shows you what a coiled string looks like.

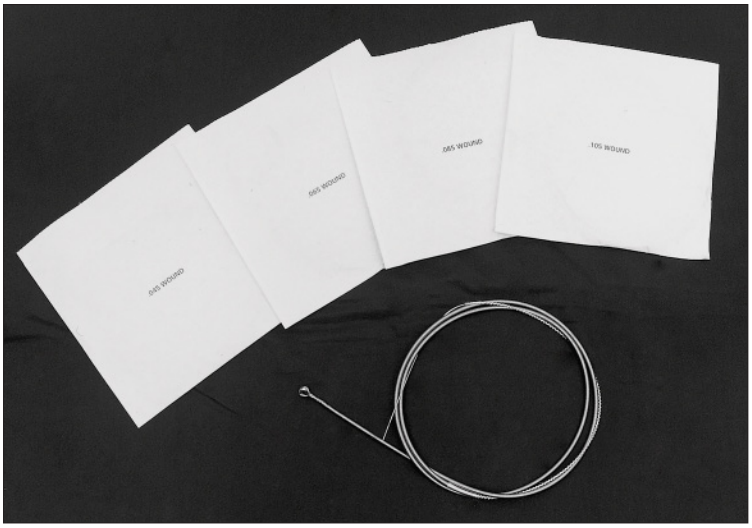


Figure 16-3: Coiled string with envelopes.

4. **Straighten the string and push the pointed end (the one without the brass ring) through the hole that's nearest you on the bridge.**

   Each string goes into a separate hole. Pull the string through the hole toward the nut. Make sure the ball at the end of the string comes to rest against the bridge. Figure 16-4 shows how to perform this step.

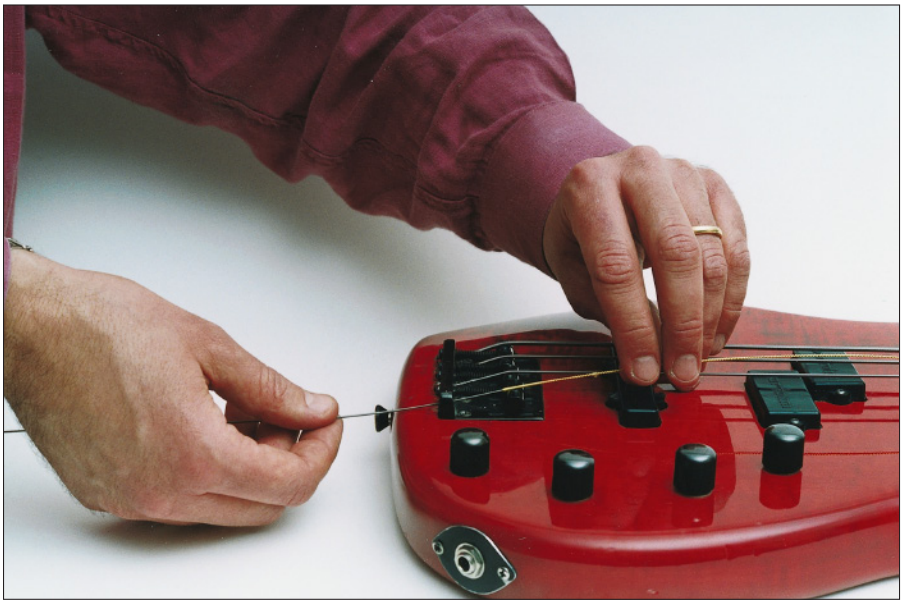


Figure 16-4: Pulling the string through the bridge.

5. **Pull the string until it's resting against its designated tuning post.**

   The post has a groove crossing the top and a hole in its center. Make sure you have enough string to extend 4 to 5 inches beyond the tuning post. This extra length ensures that your string is long enough to wind several times around the tuning post (so the string doesn't slip when tightened).

6. **With your wire cutters, cut off any excess string 4 to 5 inches past the post (see Figure 16-5).**

   Cut only from the part of the string that's wrapped with silk. Never cut the thick part of the string itself (the metal). If you cut this part of the string, it will simply unravel.

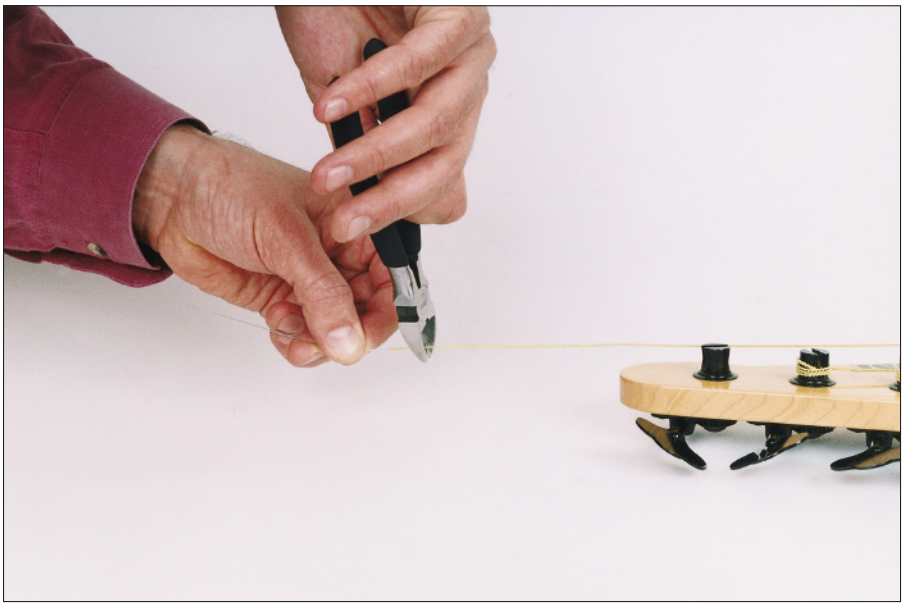


Figure 16-5: Cutting the string to size.

7. **Take the tip of the string (now freshly cut) and stick it straight down into the hole in the center of the tuning post, bending the string to the side so it rests in the groove at the top of the tuning post.**

   Hold the string in place at the tuning post with one hand. Figure 16-6 shows you how to perform this step.

8. **Turn the tuning head with your left hand to increase the tension of the string.**

   Make sure the string winds *down* the post (you can guide it with the fingers of your right hand). This downward winding increases the slight

bend (breaking angle) of the string against the nut and ensures that the string sits firmly in its groove on the nut, giving the notes better sustain.

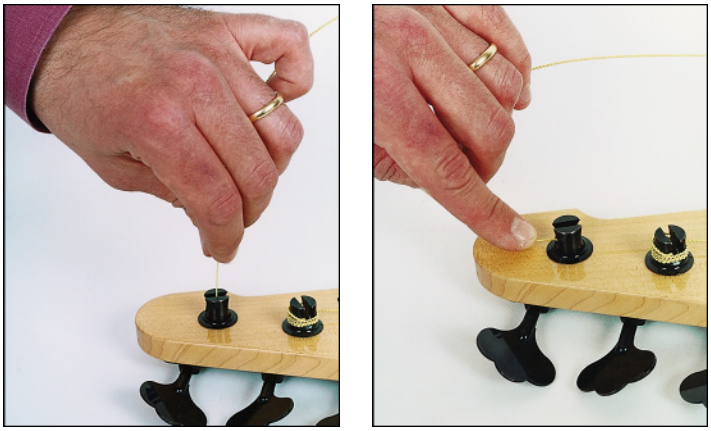


Figure 16-6: Inserting the string into the tuning post.

At the same time, make sure the other end of the string runs over the proper *saddle* (a small moveable part that has a groove for the string to fit into) at the bridge. Figure 16-7 shows a properly wound string, and Figure 16-8 shows how the strings lie over the saddle.

Figure 16-7: Windings of a string at the tuning post.

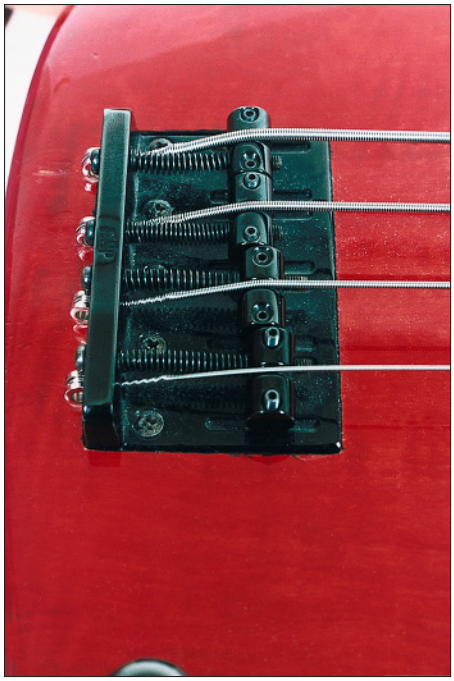


Figure 16-8: The strings at the saddle.

9. **Repeat the entire process for all the other strings, moving from thick to thin.**

   Some basses have *string retainers* that hold the two thinnest strings close to the *headstock* (the top part of the neck). Pass the two thinnest strings under the string retainers before tightening them. Now tune them up. You need to go through the tuning process (described in Chapter 2) several times, because the strings stretch out and the neck bends forward under the increased tension. When your strings are in tune, you're ready to play.

REMEMBER

Turn the tuning heads to wind the strings up. Don't wrap the strings around the tuning posts by hand; if you do it by hand, the strings will twist and lose their ability to sustain notes.

You can get many happy playing weeks (even months) out of your new strings. Just keep them reasonably clean so you don't have to change them too often. New bass strings come at a price: $15 to $40 for a four-string set.

Ensuring a Long Life for Your Strings

After you get those new strings onto your bass, you want to do all you can to keep them in good, working condition, right? Well, increasing the life of your strings is easier than you think. All you have to do is follow two basic rules:

- Wash your hands before you touch your strings.
- Don't let any other people touch your strings unless they wash their hands first.

The natural oils and sweat in *clean* hands are hard enough on your bass strings. If you indulge in a greasy roast chicken or change the oil in your car before your next rehearsal, all that grease, grime, and dirt ends up on your strings. This kind of debris shortens string life drastically. So wash those paws before you play.

Chapter 17

Keeping Your Bass in Shape: Maintenance and Light Repair

In This Chapter

- Cleaning your bass
- Repairing just the bass-ics
- Adjusting the neck and bridge
- Putting together a bass tool kit
- Storing your bass safely and properly

Bass guitars are like their owners — tough, hard, and rugged — but only on the surface. Deep down, basses (like their owners) yearn for some tender, loving care and affection, and, of course, for some appreciation.

Despite the most careful handling and the best of care, your instrument is bound to collect battle scars. If you play your bass a lot, it needs to be cleaned regularly, and certain parts will need replacing from time to time — or at least tightening and adjusting. This chapter tells you what maintenance you can easily do yourself and what maintenance is best left to your friendly, neighborhood instrument repairperson.

Cleaning Your Bass, Part by Part

Cleaning your bass is the most basic of maintenance jobs, and the first step is to wash your hands. No, really, I'm not kidding! The finish on the wood and hardware shows every fingerprint. So the least you should do is keep those fingerprints clean; don't enhance them with grime. The next few sections walk you through cleaning the various parts of your bass, one by one.

The body and neck

Cleaning the body of your bass is just like cleaning your favorite antique furniture: You need to do it very carefully. You can polish the finish with a cloth (such as an old sweatshirt), but use *guitar polish* (available in a spray bottle at any music store) instead of furniture polish. Guitar polish gets dust and dirt off your instrument and leaves your bass looking well cared for.

Apply a squirt or two of the polish to the cloth and work it into the fabric. Then rub your bass down — work on the body (front and back) and the back of the neck. Your bass will love it. Keep the polish away from the strings and the fingerboard, though; I deal with them a little later in this section.

The hardware

The *hardware* consists of all the brass and metal parts attached to the wood, with the exception of the frets and pickups. The tuning heads, bridge, and strap pins are all considered hardware. Rubbing the hardware down with a dust cloth helps keep it shiny. If too much dirt builds up on the hardware, you can use a mild brass polish from the supermarket to clean the metal. Make sure that the polish isn't abrasive and that it doesn't get onto the wood, because it will mar the wood.

The pickups

When it comes to cleaning your bass, the pickups are in a category all by themselves. A lot of dust accumulates where the wood meets the metal of the pickups (see Chapter 1 for a picture of the pickups on a bass guitar).

WARNING!

Whatever you do, don't use any liquids for this part of the cleaning. Pickups are electronic, and they can't deal with liquid. The liquid can cause them to short out, making it necessary to replace them.

Of course, getting new pickups every four weeks is one way to keep them clean. Otherwise, use cotton swabs to clean the area where your pickups meet the wood.

The fingerboard

The fingerboard consists of two major parts:

- The long wooden strip on the front of the neck
- The metal frets embedded in the long wooden strip

These two parts are made of very different materials, so each needs to be cleaned in its own special way. You can clean them only after removing your old strings and before restringing. (Check out Chapter 16 to find out how to restring your bass.)

The wood

Because the wood on your fingerboard is normally exposed, it's prone to drying out. To restore the wood to its original luster, use a dry cloth to get rid of the dirt, and then place a few drops (no more than five or so) of fingerboard oil (which you can get from your local music store) on a clean cotton cloth and work it into the wood. The wood absorbs fingerboard oil easily, so let the oil dry thoroughly before rubbing down the fingerboard again to remove any excess oil. Apply oil to the wood every other time you change the strings.

The frets

You can use a jewelry polishing cloth that has polish already soaked into it (available in any supermarket) to polish the frets. The cloth is inexpensive, and your frets will sparkle with joy (maybe not as bright as diamonds, but you never know).

When polishing the frets, don't use an abrasive jewelry polish that you have to pour out of a bottle. That stuff is rough on the wood of the fingerboard.

The strings

Yes, the strings need to be cleaned as well. After all, they take the most abuse. You can simply wipe the strings with a dry cotton cloth after you're done playing. However, using a couple drops of rubbing alcohol (available in any pharmacy) on a cotton cloth is even better.

Let the alcohol sink into the cloth for a few seconds. Then put a moist section of the cloth between your index finger and thumb and pinch one string at a time, rubbing the cloth up and down along the string's length. Check out Figure 17-1 for the proper method for cleaning bass strings.

Don't get any of the alcohol on the wood; it'll dry it out.

Figure 17-1: Cleaning the strings.

Making Minor Repairs to Your Bass

You can do your own minor repairs to your bass in order to keep it in top-notch playing condition — tweaking a few screws, touching up a bit of finish, soldering a couple of electronic connectionszzzzzzzzzap! . . . well, maybe not the electronics.

The taming of the screw(s)

The parts of the bass guitar are held together in two ways: with glue and with screws. A *luthier* (a person who builds stringed instruments) uses specific glues for each type of wood on the bass. If anything that's supposed to be glued comes apart, take your instrument to a qualified repairperson.

If, on the other hand, a piece of hardware comes loose or starts rattling, you can simply screw it back where it belongs. Just remember one thing: Your bass has an array of different-sized screws. Most of the screws are of the Phillips variety. Buy a set of screwdrivers at the hardware store and make sure you have a perfect fit for each screw on your bass. Why do I say that? The reason is simple: If you force a screwdriver that doesn't fit into a screw, you'll end up stripping the head of the screw . . . and then you're really screwed.

If you don't feel comfortable attaching the screws to your bass, don't mess around. Take your precious instrument to a qualified repairperson.

Taking care of the finish

The *finish* is the thin layer of lacquer that seals the wood of your bass. The finish usually is glossy; it looks beautiful when the instrument is new. The finish also serves a function: It protects the wood from severe changes in humidity. Low humidity makes the wood brittle and prone to cracking; high humidity causes the wood to swell and warp.

Collisions between your bass and other objects (such as the drummer's cymbals) may leave dings or cracks in the finish. If you want that perfect look back, you have to take your bass to a pro for refinishing, which can be costly. If you're not overly concerned with the look, or you think that battle scars are cool, seal the cracks with colorless nail polish. You can also try to match your bass's color with a small bottle of model paint from a toy store.

Be vigilant in protecting the back of your bass neck. If you scratch it, you'll be able to feel the scratch when you're playing. If the scratch is shallow, try to get it out by rubbing the entire neck up and down with 0000-grade (superfine) steel wool. Sand the entire length of the neck. The steel wool will give the back of the neck a nice satin feel. If you still feel the scratch, have a repairperson refinish the neck of your bass.

Don't get too used to just sanding the scratches off the neck of your bass. Each time you sand the neck, even with the finest-grade steel wool, you take a layer of finish off. Eventually, none of the finish will be left, and you'll need to get the neck refinished. Of course, you'll be better off if you don't get your bass neck scratched in the first place.

Leaving the electronics to the experts

If you hear crackling when you turn any of the knobs, it may be a minor problem. Just turn the knobs vigorously back and forth to eliminate the crackling. If that doesn't do the trick — you guessed it — take it to a pro.

With the advent of high-tech basses that feature complex pre-amps and pickups, I simply don't recommend touching the electronics. Take your bass to a pro to have any electronic problem fixed — unless, of course, you have a graduate degree in electrical engineering.

Adjusting the Bass Guitar

Your bass is a sturdy instrument, but every now and then it needs some slight adjusting. As the weather changes from season to season (provided you live in a location that has seasons), the wood in your bass also changes. The neck tends to bend or straighten slightly, causing the strings to either pull away from the frets or rest against them; at times this makes playing almost impossible.

You can counter the forces of nature by

- Tweaking the *truss rod* (a metal rod that runs inside the length of the bass neck)
- Adjusting the *saddles* (the little, moving metal parts of the bridge that have grooves for the strings to lie across)

Providing relief to the truss rod

The truss rod controls the curvature of your bass neck. Because the strings need space to vibrate freely over the entire length of the neck, your bass neck has to have a slight *relief* (curve) to give the strings room. Now notice that I said *slight* relief. If the relief is too great, the *action* (the space between the strings and frets) will be too high, and you'll need arms like Popeye's to press down the strings.

How much action is enough to keep the strings vibrating while still making them easy to press down? With your left hand, press the E string (the thickest string) down at the first fret. At the same time, press the E string down at the last fret with your right hand. The space between the E string and the neck (between the 7th and 12th frets) should be about the thickness of a credit card (finally, a good use for credit cards). You can have a little more space if you prefer, or slightly less space if you play very lightly.

To adjust the action, you need to turn a screw in the truss rod to change the curvature of the neck. The screw is located either on the headstock or at the other end of the neck.

On some basses, you have to remove the neck from the body in order to reach the screw of the truss rod. Don't attempt to loosen the screws at the back of the bass that hold the neck in place without first loosening the tension of the strings. Otherwise, the neck will snap off, stripping away the wood that holds the screws.

In most cases, you can adjust the truss rod with the small Allen wrench that comes with your bass. If you lose this wrench, you can get another one from your local music store or the bass manufacturer. On other basses, the screw of the truss rod requires a Phillips screwdriver, which doesn't come with the bass. (You can buy it at the hardware store.)

If you have too much space between the E string and the neck, insert the Allen wrench or Phillips screwdriver into the screw and then tighten the truss rod by turning the wrench or screwdriver clockwise. If your strings buzz when you play on the first four frets (near the headstock), you need to loosen the truss rod by turning the wrench or screwdriver counterclockwise. Take a look at Figure 17-2 to see how to adjust a truss rod.

Figure 17-2: Adjusting the truss rod.

WARNING!

Use only the specific wrench or screwdriver that fits into your truss rod. If you don't have the proper tool, get one from your local music store or the manufacturer of the bass. Don't try to force the truss rod with anything that doesn't quite fit. If you strip the truss rod, it'll cost you. Turn the truss rod only between one-quarter and one-half of a turn per day. You need to allow the wood to settle before you do any more adjustments.

Raising and lowering the bridge

You also can adjust the action of your bass by adjusting the saddles on the bridge. The saddles can be lowered or raised by turning the screws at the top with an Allen wrench. When you adjust the saddles, you lower or raise the string height (the action). Figure 17-3 shows how to adjust the saddles.

Figure 17-3: Adjusting the height of the saddles.

TIP

Getting your bass set up by a repairperson initially is a good idea. After you get your bass back from the repairperson, take note of how high he or she set the saddles and how the strings feel. From then on, you can fine-tune your bass by comparing it to the original setup.

You also can use the saddles to adjust the intonation of your bass. If you hear your bass going out of tune when you play on the very high or very low frets, you need to adjust the intonation. To do this, find a screwdriver that fits into the screws at the back of the bridge. Turning these screws moves the saddles back and forth. Read the following steps and check out Figure 17-4 to find out how to adjust the saddles to correct the intonation:

1. **Play the harmonic of one of the strings at the 12th fret, and tune the string to a tuner.**

When the harmonic of the string is in perfect tune, play the same string by fretting it at the 12th fret and compare the pitch of the note with the pitch of the harmonic. (See Chapter 2 for how to play a harmonic.)

2. **If the fretted note is sharp compared to the harmonic, lengthen the string by tightening the screw.**

   Moving the saddle away from the neck lengthens the string. Now tune the string again using the harmonic. Compare the pitch of the harmonic with the fretted note, and keep adjusting the saddle until both the harmonic and the fretted note are in tune.

3. **If the fretted note is flat, shorten the string by loosening the screw to move the saddle toward the neck.**

   Tune the string using the harmonic, and keep adjusting the saddle until both the harmonic and fretted note are in tune.

4. **Repeat this process with all the strings.**

REMEMBER

Be patient and take your time when you're adjusting your bass. It needs to be done only about four times a year (as the seasons change), but you have to take a whole afternoon to do it right, especially if you're adjusting your bass for the first time. The process will bring you closer to your instrument — you know, bass bonding.

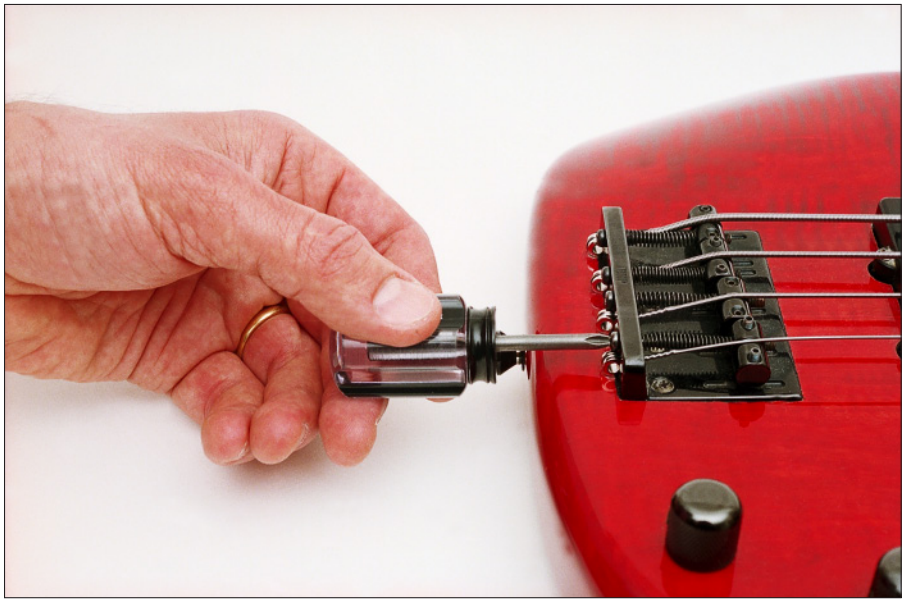


Figure 17-4: Adjusting the intonation.

Assembling a Cleaning and Repair Tool Bag

Before you attempt any of the adjustments or cleaning procedures I cover in this chapter, you need to make sure you have all the required tools. Start assembling a tool set just for your bass. Here's a list of what needs to be in a bass tool bag (see Figure 17-5):

- Truss-rod wrench (usually the Allen wrench that comes with your bass)
- Screwdriver or Allen wrench for every screw on the bass

  A multi-screwdriver tool is okay, but you can get more leverage with separate screwdrivers. Make sure you have a screwdriver or Allen wrench that fits the screws for the saddle.
- Rubbing alcohol (make sure it's in a bottle that won't leak)
- Cotton rags for cleaning (make sure to replace them once in a while)
- Super-fine steel wool
- Colorless nail polish (or a color that matches your bass)

Figure 17-5: Contents of a bass tool bag.

- Electronic tuner (this needs to be part of your tool set if you adjust the intonation yourself)
- Wire cutters for changing your strings
- Jewelry polish cloth for polishing the frets

Be sure to keep your bass tools separate from your household tools so they won't get lost or damaged. Besides, basses can get jealous if they find out that *their* truss-rod wrench was used to tighten the bathroom faucet.

Storing Your Bass

Keeping your bass guitar happy is really quite simple. If you're comfortable, your bass will be comfortable. You want to keep it out of direct sunlight, and you want to keep it out of the snow — at least for any extended period of time. The safest place to keep your bass is in its case, but then it can be kind of a hassle to get to when inspiration strikes. If you want to keep your bass handy, place it on a sturdy bass guitar stand, preferably with the strings covered by a soft cloth. Just make sure you set it up in a safe corner of the room that doesn't get a lot of traffic. (In other words, don't place it in the path of the family dog, which just happens to be a clumsy Saint Bernard.)

If you have a *gig bag* (a soft, padded carrying pack), you can keep your bass in it when you're not playing. The gig bag gives your bass some protection (actually a good gig bag can give the bass a *lot* of protection), and it also allows you to get to your bass relatively easily.

Nearly all bass guitars are solid-body instruments (they're not hollow), making them quite sturdy. Solid-body bass guitars have a large tolerance for humidity and temperature change, but you still need to make sure you keep your bass in an area with a reasonable, consistent temperature. For example, keeping your bass right next to the fireplace isn't a good idea. Room temperature with moderate humidity will do the trick, making your bass as happy as a clam.

When you go away and can't take your bass with you, be kind to it. Put your bass in its case and keep it in a climate-controlled environment. You can stand it upright in a closet or lay it flat under your bed. Don't store your bass in a damp basement or an uninsulated garage. You want it to still love you when you come back, don't you?

Part VI

The Part of Tens

In this part . . .

A *For Dummies* book without a Part of Tens? No way! Besides, *Bass Guitar For Dummies,* 2nd Edition, has a special surprise for you: Chapter 18 lists ten excellent bassists you want to know, and Chapter 19 runs down ten of the most successful bass/drum combinations, with samples of their styles that will have your fingers itching to play.

Also, don't forget to check out the appendix, which explains the organization of the CD. It provides a listing of each figure that corresponds to a CD track so you can see and hear the musical examples with ease.

Chapter 18

Ten Innovative Bassists You Should Know

In This Chapter

- Getting to know some great bassists
- Seeing who's responsible for influencing the bass world

Certain bass players have made a lasting mark on the entire bass world, regardless of which genre of music they play. These innovators advance the instrument to new levels, influencing everyone who follows in their footsteps. Each of the bass players in this chapter has a unique style; it isn't easy to say how these giants influenced one another (it's sort of like saying "Which came first, the magnetic pickup or the steel string?"), so I simply put them in alphabetical order by last name.

You sure can benefit from listening to these masters of the bass world. If you'd like to see the Web sites of any of these bassists, I've included links to them on the contact page of my own Web site, `www.sourkrautmusic.com`.

Jack Bruce

Jack Bruce revolutionized the bass guitar in the '60s and '70s with his free-spirited, fiery approach to playing. His style is highly energetic and improvisational. As a result of Bruce's playing, the rock bassist's job expanded from a strictly supportive function to a much more prominent role. Jack is best known for his work with the rock group Cream. "Sunshine of Your Love" and "White Room" are signature Bruce tunes.

Stanley Clarke

Considered by many to be the liberator of the bass, Stanley Clarke pioneered the concept of the "solo bass album" in the early '70s and brought the bass guitar (including his higher-pitched tenor and piccolo basses) from the back line to the front of the stage in a featured melodic role usually reserved for guitarists or horn players. Clarke is best known for his work with the jazz-fusion group Return To Forever and for his solo projects. Signature Clarke tunes include "School Days" and "Lopsy Lu."

John Entwistle

John Entwistle's nickname (among others) was "Thunderfingers." He's best remembered as the bassist for the rock group The Who. From the mid-1960s to the early '80s, Entwistle developed a busy style of lead bass playing that included occasional explosive solos (and he was *loud*). He also performed as a solo artist. Signature Entwistle tunes include "My Generation" and "Who Are You."

James Jamerson

James Jamerson is the father of modern electric bass. Between the early '60s and the late '70s he played on more number-one hits than Elvis, The Beatles, The Beach Boys, and the Rolling Stones . . . *combined.* He was the main bassist for the Funk Brothers, the legendary rhythm section for the Motown label. Some of his signature tunes are "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" (check out the Gladys Knight version for some incredible bass playing) and "For Once In My Life."

Will Lee

Will Lee is living the dream of a bassist. He started his career as a top New York session player in the early '70s. Lee records and performs with stars in various musical genres that range from jazz (the Brecker Brothers) to rock and pop (Steely Dan, Barry Manilow) to soul (James Brown, D'Angelo) and everything in between. A musical chameleon whose super-precise bass lines enhance any contemporary style, he can be heard most nights on the popular *Late Show with David Letterman.* He also tours with his Beatles cover band, the Fab Faux.

Paul McCartney

Perhaps the most famous bassist in history, Paul McCartney was one of the Beatles. He embarked on a solo career after the Fab Four's split in 1970. McCartney pushed the bass to new levels in rock and pop music by playing with a melodic style that embellished the vocals and melody of a tune. Signature McCartney tunes include "Something" and "Come Together" (among many, many others).

Marcus Miller

A strong soloist and groove player, Marcus Miller is a multitalented musician and producer who just happens to play bass. Miller burst onto the scene in the late '70s and never left. He mixes soul, R & B, hip-hop, funk, and contemporary jazz and comes up with original works of stunning beauty and depth. He's best known for his work with jazzers Miles Davis and David Sanborn as well as for his studio work and solo projects.

Jaco Pastorius

Hailed as the greatest electric bassist in the world, Jaco Pastorius restructured the function of the bass guitar in music when he exploded onto the scene in the mid-1970s. He was truly unprecedented, performing audacious technical feats. Jaco (he's typically referred to by his first name) played both fluid grooves and hornlike solos with equal virtuosity, and he incorporated harmonics into his playing as an additional musical tool (along with the regular notes). He's best known for his work with the jazz-fusion group Weather Report and as a solo artist. Signature Jaco tunes include "Donna Lee" and "Teen Town."

Victor Wooten

Defying boundaries and categories, Victor Wooten is a modern bass virtuoso who came to fame in the late '80s. Best known for his work with Béla Fleck and the Flecktones and as a solo artist, he's continually pushing the bass further and further into the limelight. Check out Wooten's bass playing on the CD *Live Art* with Béla Fleck and the Flecktones, and on his solo album *Palmystery.* You also can hear him with two other fabulous bassists who are

on this list. He plays with Marcus Miller and Stanley Clarke on the album *Thunder* under the band name S.M.V.

X (Fill in Your Own)

This spot is yours to fill. Which bassist influenced you to pick up the bass (and this book) and made you want to play? Your bassist choice can be a world famous (and fabulous) rocker like Adam Clayton, Sting, Geddy Lee, or Flea; a jazz virtuoso like Alain Caron or John Patitucci; or a famous (to bassists) studio player like Lee Sklar or Anthony Jackson . . . or even your talented next-door neighbor or your teacher.

I have my favorite picked out, but this choice is yours. Quite frankly, I have more than one picked out . . . but don't tell anyone!

Chapter 19

Ten Great Rhythm Sections (Bassists and Drummers)

In This Chapter

- Discovering great bassist-drummer combinations
- Listening to some examples in the styles of the pros

The bass guitar, more than any other instrument, is at its best when tightly aligned with the drums. Together, the bassist and drummer drive the song with powerful grooves, constantly listening and reacting to each other. In this chapter, I introduce you to ten classic bass-and-drum combinations (sorted alphabetically by the last name of the bass player) that have enhanced a multitude of songs. If you listen to music at all (and I presume you do), you probably have heard most of these rhythm sections already. If you haven't, you should make a concerted effort to find recordings that feature these classic combinations — and then listen and enjoy!

On Track 86 of the CD that accompanies this book, you can hear brief examples in the styles of these masters. However, to get a sense of truly great bass grooves, you need to listen to the original recordings. Go directly to the source and get inspired by the same musicians who inspire me.

Bootsy Collins and Jab'o Starks

Bootsy Collins and Jab'o Starks are stellar as James Brown's rhythm section of 1970. Their work is one of the earliest examples of the complex interplay between bass and drums. Check out James Brown's recordings "Sex Machine" and "Super Bad" to hear their funky grooves. Figure 19-1 features a bass line in the style of their playing.

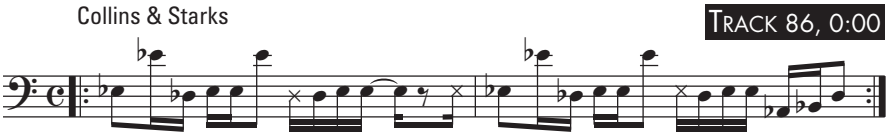


Figure 19-1: Bass line in the style of Bootsy Collins.

Donald "Duck" Dunn and Al Jackson, Jr.

Donald "Duck" Dunn and Al Jackson, Jr. recorded many hits for a number of artists as members of the house band for the Stax/Volts record label from the mid-1960s through the early '70s. Stax was one of the ultimate R & B/Soul record labels, featuring artists such as Sam and Dave, Otis Redding, Isaac Hayes, and many more. Listen to "Soul Man" and "In The Midnight Hour" to hear their soulful R & B/Soul grooves. Figure 19-2 shows you an example of a bass line in the style of "Duck" Dunn.

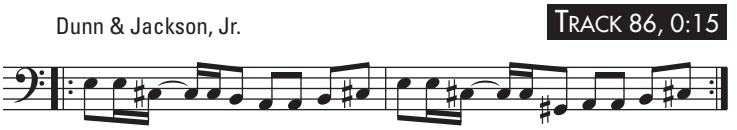


Figure 19-2: Bass line in the style of Donald "Duck" Dunn.

James Jamerson and Benny Benjamin

James Jamerson and Benny Benjamin combined to form the ultimate rhythm section for the Motown record label throughout the '60s. Their playing can be heard on hits such as "I Was Made to Love Her" and "Going to a Go-Go." Check out Figure 19-3 for an example of Jamerson's style of playing.

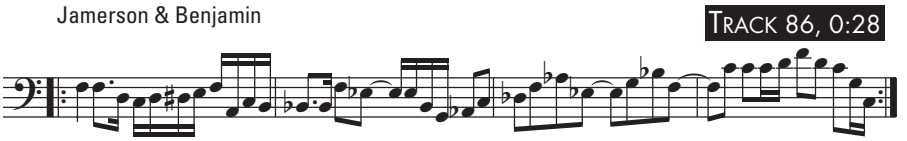


Figure 19-3: Bass line in the style of James Jamerson.

John Paul Jones and John Bonham

John Paul Jones and John Bonham are best known for their work in the band Led Zeppelin. Songs such as "The Lemon Song" and "Ramble On" exemplify their work from 1968 through 1980. Take a look at Figure 19-4 for an example of a bass line in the style of John Paul Jones.

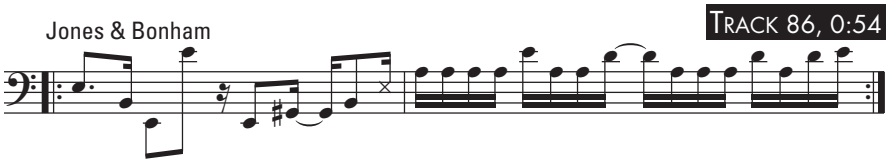


Figure 19-4: Bass line in the style of John Paul Jones.

Joe Osborn and Hal Blaine

Joe Osborn and Hal Blaine were members of an elite assortment of session players who recorded a staggering number of hits during the "California Rock Explosion" of the '60s (when an unusually large number of hits were recorded by bands in California). Osborn and Blaine laid down solid grooves for the 5th Dimension, Simon and Garfunkel, the Mamas and the Papas, the Monkees, and many more. Listen to "Vehicle" and "California Dreaming" for great examples of their diversity. Figure 19-5 shows an example of a groove in the style of Joe Osborn.

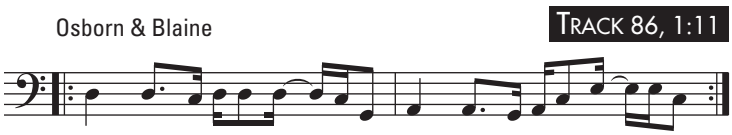


Figure 19-5: Bass line in the style of Joe Osborn.

Jaco Pastorius and Peter Erskine

Jaco Pastorius and Peter Erskine were both members of the pioneering jazz-rock-fusion group Weather Report during the high point of the band's

popularity in the late ’70s. Their complex interplay of bass and drums can be found in such tunes as “Birdland” and “Teen Town” (the live recordings, not the studio recordings). Erskine later went on to play with Jaco’s big band Word of Mouth. To call these two masters dynamic is truly an understatement. Check out Figure 19-6 for an example of a bass line in the style of Jaco Pastorius.

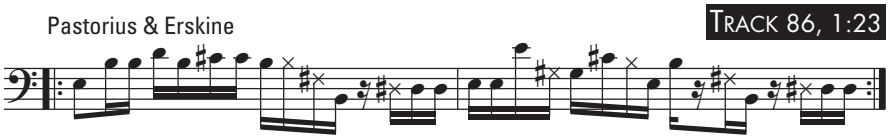


Figure 19-6: Bass line in the style of Jaco Pastorius.

George Porter, Jr. and Zig Modeliste

The syncopated and rubbery style of George Porter, Jr. and Joseph “Zigaboo” Modeliste represents New Orleans funk at its very finest. As members of the Meters from the late ’60s to the late ’70s, Porter and Modeliste laid down some of the most memorable grooves in history in such tunes as “Cissy Strut” and “Funky Miracle.” Figure 19-7 features an example of a bass line in the style of George Porter, Jr.

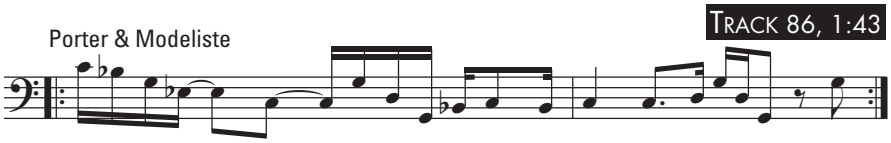


Figure 19-7: Bass line in the style of George Porter, Jr.

Francis Rocco Prestia and David Garibaldi

The soul funk of the Oakland-based band Tower of Power was at its peak throughout the ’70s with the combination of Francis Rocco Prestia and David Garibaldi. Their solid sixteenth-note grooves can be heard on “Soul Vaccination” and “What Is Hip.” Figure 19-8 features a bass line in the style of Francis Rocco Prestia.

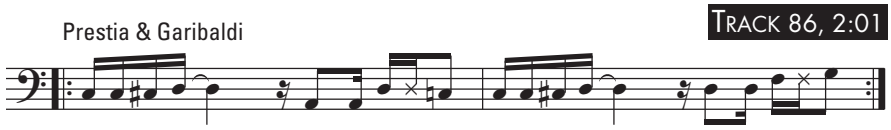


Figure 19-8: Bass line in the style of Francis Rocco Prestia.

Chuck Rainey and Bernard Purdie

The power and nuances of Chuck Rainey's and Bernard Purdie's playing drove some of the best music recorded in New York in the mid-1960s and '70s. This duo laid down the grooves for a diverse list of artists (from Aretha Franklin to Steely Dan). The Rainey-Purdie combination shines on tunes like "Until You Come Back To Me (That's What I'm Gonna Do)" and "Home At Last." Figure 19-9 shows a bass line in the style of Chuck Rainey.

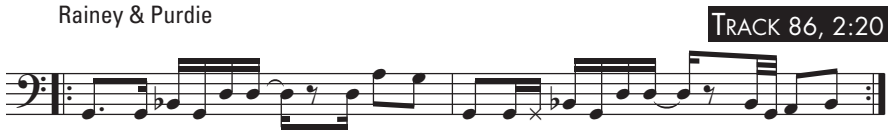


Figure 19-9: Bass line in the style of Chuck Rainey.

Robbie Shakespeare and Sly Dunbar

Robbie Shakespeare and Sly Dunbar are widely considered the premier bass-drum combination of reggae. Besides playing on dozens of records together, both were members of Peter Tosh's band in the late '70s. Shakespeare and Dunbar played some of the most memorable reggae grooves in history on such tunes as "Mama Africa" and "Whatcha Gonna Do." In Figure 19-10, you can see a bass line in the style of Robbie Shakespeare.

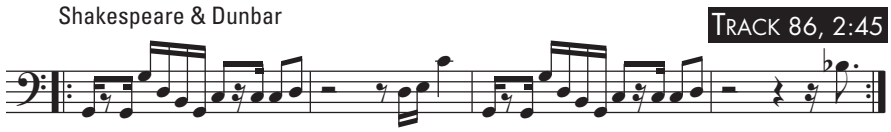


Figure 19-10: Bass line in the style of Robbie Shakespeare.

Appendix

How to Use the CD

You can hear almost every example of music in *Bass Guitar For Dummies,* 2nd Edition, on the CD found in the back of this book. The text in the book explains the different techniques and styles, the figures show you examples in music notation, and the CD demonstrates how the examples sound when played correctly.

TIP

Having the CD ready to go in your CD player and then playing the appropriate examples as you read about them in the text is a great way to experience this book in all its glory. When you hear an example that you just have to try, grab your bass and play it. If the example is beyond your grasp, go to an earlier section and work on your technique.

Relating the Text to the CD

Every musical example in this book has a small black bar (the track bar) that tells you where the example is located on the CD. The track bar gives you the track number and the start time (in minutes and seconds) for the example. You can then cue up the CD to hear it.

Use the "track" or "track skip" button on your CD player to find the desired track. Then use the "cue/review," "fast forward," or "search" button to get to the start time of the example. For instance, if the track bar for a musical example reads "Track 18, 0:33," press the "track skip" button until you see 18 on your track display. Then press and hold the "cue" button until your "minute/second" display (next to the track number, in this case 18) reads 0:33 (or just a little less). Release the "cue" button and enjoy listening to the music.

TIP

If you want to play along with the CD, give yourself some extra time by cueing up a few seconds before the desired example starts (for example, in the case of "Track 33, 0:33," you may want to cue up to Track 33, 0:28). When you give yourself a few extra seconds, you have time to toss the remote and get your bass into playing position before the music starts.

Count-offs

All the musical examples on the CD are preceded by a *count-off,* a rhythmic click that indicates the tempo of the music so you know when to come in, if you're playing along. Actually, the clicks are Dave Meade (a drummer) banging away on a wood block or Michael D'Agostino (another drummer) hitting his sticks. Did I tell you that this CD uses live musicians? Yeah, you get to play the grooves with a real drummer and, on occasion, a real keyboard player (Lou DiNatale) or guitar player (Sean Harkness). All are musicians extraordinaire and good friends.

If the music is in regular 4/4 meter, you hear four clicks before the music begins. If the music is in 3/4 meter, you get three clicks. If the music is in 5/4 meter, you get five counts before the music starts, and if it's in 7/4 meter, you get — that's right — seven clicks.

Stereo separation

Most of the examples (all the ones that feature bass and drums) are recorded in what's known as *stereo split,* in which the bass is only recorded on one of the channels. In the examples, you can hear both the bass and the drums if the *balance control* on your stereo is in its normal position (straight up). If you want to hear more of the bass, just turn the balance control to the right. You can then listen to the bass part with a little bit of drums in the background. If you feel that you can hang with the drummer alone, just turn the balance control all the way to the left. You can then play to your heart's content with only the drums (and keys or guitar).

Stereo split works on your computer as well (provided it has a CD player built in). Just find your system preferences and go to the sound tab. In this tab, you should come across the output and be able to pan your stereo sound left or right. You need to have external speakers or headphones hooked up to your headphone jack.

System Requirements

Note that this is an audio-only CD — just pop it into your CD player (or whatever you use to listen to music CDs).

If you're listening to the CD on your computer, make sure your computer meets the minimum system requirements shown in the following list. If your

computer doesn't match up to most of these requirements, you may have problems using the CD:

- A PC with a Pentium or faster processor; or a Mac OS computer with a 68040 or faster processor
- Microsoft Windows 95 or later; or Mac OS system software 7.6.1 or later
- At least 32MB of total RAM; for best performance, we recommend at least 64MB
- A CD-ROM drive
- A sound card for PCs; Mac OS computers have built-in sound support
- Media Player, such as Windows Media Player or Real Player

TIP

If you need more information on the basics, check out these books published by Wiley Publishing, Inc.: *PCs For Dummies,* by Dan Gookin; *Macs For Dummies,* by David Pogue; *Windows 95 For Dummies, Windows 98 For Dummies, Windows 2000 Professional For Dummies,* and *Microsoft Windows Me Millennium Edition For Dummies,* all by Andy Rathbone.

Tracks on the CD

The following list shows the tracks on the CD, along with the track times and figure numbers that they match up with in the book. The list also provides a description of what you're listening to on each track.

TIP

Keep the CD with your book. The plastic sleeve protects it from scratches and stains, and when you grab your book for some playing, the CD will always be right where you expect it. Try to get into the habit of following along with the music notation as you're listening to the CD; this will get you used to seeing music as you hear it and familiarize you with sight reading.

Enjoy listening and playing along!

Track	Time	Figure	Description
1		n/a	Open strings
2		2-23	Open-string song
3		2-24	Closed-string song
4		3-2	E minor rock groove

Track	*Time*	*Figure*	*Description*
5		n/a	Playing with the metronome
6	0:00	3-8	Whole notes
	0:12	3-8	Half notes
	0:24	3-8	Quarter notes
	0:36	3-8	Eighth notes
	0:48	3-8	Sixteenth notes
	1:00	3-8	Triplets
7		3-11	Notes and rests
8	0:00	3-12 a	Beats as chunks of notes
	0:12	3-12 b	
	0:25	3-12 c	
	0:38	3-12 d	
	0:51	3-12 e	
	1:03	3-12 f	
	1:16	3-12 g	
	1:29	3-12 h	
	1:42	3-12 i	
	1:54	3-12 j	
	2:07	3-12 k	
9		3-13	"Two Too Tight Shoes Blues" notation
10		4-3	Right-hand accents
11		n/a	Right-hand string crossing
12		4-4	First line of left-hand permutations
13		4-6	Practice exercise for combining the right and left hands
14	0:00	5-2	The structure of the major scale on a grid
	0:10	5-3	The structure of the natural minor scale
15	0:00	5-4	Structure and sequence of the major triad
	0:12	5-5 a	Accompaniments using the major triad
	0:36	5-5 b	
	1:01	5-5 c	
16	0:00	5-6	Structure and sequence of the minor triad
	0:10	5-7 a	Accompaniments using the minor triad
	0:35	5-7 b	
	1:00	5-7 c	

Track	*Time*	*Figure*	*Description*
17		5-8	Song with triad accompaniments
18	0:00	5-9	Major chord and scale
	0:12	5-9	Minor chord and scale
	0:24	5-9	Dominant chord and scale
	0:35	5-9	Half-diminished chord and scale
19		5-10	A boogie bass line
20	0:00	5-11	Ionian mode
	0:09		Lydian mode
	0:16		Major 7th chord
	0:25		Mixolydian mode
	0:33		Dominant 7th chord
	0:41	5-11 (con't)	Aeolian mode
	0:50		Dorian mode
	0:58		Phrygian mode
	1:06		Minor 7th chord
	1:13		Locrian mode
	1:21		Half-diminished chord
21	0:00	Sidebar figure	Melodic minor scale
	0:09		Harmonic minor scale
22	0:00	5-14	Using a chromatic tone outside the box in a major bass line
	0:23	5-15	Using a chromatic tone outside the box in a minor bass line
23		5-16	Using dead notes in a groove
24		5-17	Dead note groove and exercise
25	0:00	5-18	Bass groove using the chord
	0:23	5-19	Bass groove using the 7th chord
	0:46	5-20	Bass groove using the Mixolydian mode
	1:10	5-21	Bass groove using chromatic tones
	1:33	5-22	Bass groove using dead notes
26		n/a	C7 jam using sampling accompaniments
27	0:00	5-24 a	Harmonically ambiguous grooves
	0:11	5-24 b	
	0:24	5-24 c	

Track	*Time*	*Figure*	*Description*
	0:36	5-24 d	
	0:51	5-24 e	
28	0:00	6-1 a	Six grooves with different groove skeletons
	0:15	6-1 b	
	0:30	6-1 c	
	0:45	6-1 d	
	1:00	6-1 e	
	1:15	6-1 f	
29		6-2	Song using only the groove skeleton
30	0:00	6-4 a	Creating a groove for D7 (D dominant) — root
	0:08	6-4 b	Groove skeleton choices
	0:29	6-4 c & d	Scale structure
	0:36	6-5	A simple groove for D7
	1:02		A complex groove for D7
31	0:00	6-6 a	Creating a groove for Dm (D minor) — root
	0:09	6-6 b	Groove skeleton choices
	0:28	6-6 c & d	Scale structure
	0:36	6-7	A simple groove for Dm7
	1:02		A complex groove for Dm7
32	0:00	6-8 a	Creating a groove for D Maj7 (D major) — root
	0:08	6-8 b	Groove skeleton choices
	0:28	6-8 c & d	Scale structure
	0:36	6-9	A simple groove for D Maj7
	1:02		A complex groove for D Maj7
33	0:00	6-11 a	Mobile groove using constant structure
	0:09	6-11 c	Progression
34	0:00	6-12 a	Mobile groove using chord tones — major
	0:11	6-12 a	Mobile groove using chord tones — minor
	0:21	6-12 a	Mobile groove using chord tones — dominant
	0:33	6-12 c	Progression
35	0:00	6-13	Groove with upper groove apex
	0:21	6-14	Upper groove apex exercise

Track	*Time*	*Figure*	*Description*
36	0:00	6-15	Groove with lower groove apex
	0:18	6-16	Lower groove apex exercise
37	0:00	n/a	The sound of the bass drum
	0:05	6-17	Grooving with the bass drum
	0:16	n/a	The sound of the snare drum
	0:22	6-18	Grooving with the snare drum
	0:34	n/a	The sound of the hi-hat
	0:42	6-19	Grooving with the hi-hat
38	0:00	7-1	The blues scale
	0:07	7-2 a	Blues-scale lick (played three times)
	0:25	7-2 b	Blues-scale lick (played three times)
	0:40	7-2 c	Blues-scale lick (played four times)
39	0:00	7-3	The minor pentatonic scale
	0:08	7-4 a	Minor pentatonic lick (played three times)
	0:26	7-4 b	Minor pentatonic lick (played three times)
	0:40	7-4 c	Minor pentatonic lick (played four times)
40	0:00	7-5	The major pentatonic scale
	0:07	7-6 a	Major pentatonic lick (played three times)
	0:25	7-6 b	Major pentatonic lick (played three times)
	0:39	7-6 c	Major pentatonic lick (played four times)
41		7-7	Progression for soloing
42	0:00	7-8 a	Two-beat fills using the blues scale in eighth notes
	0:14		Two-beat fills using the minor pentatonic scale in eighth notes
	0:30		Two-beat fills using the major pentatonic scale in eighth notes
	0:45	7-8 b	Two-beat fills using the blues scale in triplets
	1:01		Two-beat fills using the minor pentatonic scale in triplets
	1:16		Two-beat fills using the major pentatonic scale in triplets
	1:31	7-8 c	Two-beat fills using the blues scale in sixteenth notes

Track	Time	Figure	Description
	1:49		Two-beat fills using the minor pentatonic scale in sixteenth notes
	2:09		Two-beat fills using the major pentatonic scale in sixteenth notes
43	0:00	8-1	Rock 'n' roll groove using only the root
	0:12	8-2	Rock 'n' roll groove using notes from the chord
	0:23	8-3	Rock 'n' roll groove in minor using notes from the chord
	0:35	8-4	Rock 'n' roll groove using notes from the chord and mode
	0:47	8-6	Rock 'n' roll box groove
	0:59	8-7	Rock 'n' roll groove in a minor tonality
	1:10	8-8	Rock 'n' roll groove in a major 7th tonality
	1:22	8-9	Rock 'n' roll groove with a 6
44	0:00	8-10	Hard rock groove using only the root
	0:13	8-11	Hard rock groove using a minor chord
	0:27	8-12	Hard rock groove with notes from the minor chord and mode
	0:40	8-13	Hard rock box groove in a minor tonality
45	0:00	8-14	Pop rock groove using only the root
	0:12	8-15	Pop rock groove using a major tonality
	0:24	8-16	Pop rock groove using notes in the dominant tonality
	0:37	8-17	Pop rock box groove in dominant tonality
46	0:00	8-18	Blues rock groove using only the root
	0:11	8-19	Blues rock groove using notes from the chord
	0:22	8-20	Blues rock groove using notes from the chord and mode
	0:34	8-21	Blues rock box groove
47	0:00	8-22	Country rock groove using only the root
	0:12	8-23	Country rock groove using notes from the chord
	0:26	8-24	Country rock groove using the mode
	0:39	8-25	Country rock box groove

Track	Time	Figure	Description
48		8-26	Generic rock groove and song
49	0:00	9-1	Swing groove using a major pentatonic scale
	0:19	9-2	Swing groove using a Mixolydian mode
50		9-5	Walking etude using root-5th-octave plus leading tone
51		9-6	Walking etude using chord tones plus leading tone
52		9-7	Walking etude using scale tones plus leading tone
53		9-8	Jazz blues walking pattern
54	0:00	9-9	Blues shuffle groove using only the root
	0:19	9-10	Blues shuffle groove using a major chord
	0:39	9-11	Blues shuffle groove using a Mixolydian mode
	0:59	9-12	Blues shuffle groove using a minor mode
	1:19	9-13	Blues shuffle groove using a mixolydian mode and a chromatic tone
	1:39	9-14	Blues shuffle groove in a minor tonality with a chromatic tone
55	0:00	9-15	Funk shuffle groove using only the root
	0:30	9-16	Funk shuffle groove for dominant and minor chords
	0:59	9-17	Funk shuffle groove using notes from the dominant or minor modes
56		9-18	Generic shuffle song
57	0:00	10-1	R & B groove using a major (Ionian) mode
	0:28	10-2	R & B groove using a dominant (Mixolydian) mode
	0:54	10-3	R & B groove using a minor (Dorian or Aeolian) mode
	1:21	10-4 a	R & B grooves in major with dead notes and chromatic tones
	1:38	10-4 b	R & B grooves in dominant with dead notes and chromatic tones
	1:55	10-4 c	R & B grooves in minor with dead notes and chromatic tones

Track	*Time*	*Figure*	*Description*
58	0:00	10-5	Motown groove using constant structure for major and dominant tonalities
	0:23	10-6	Motown groove using constant structure for dominant or minor tonalities
59	0:00	10-7	Fusion groove for a major or dominant chord
	0:33	10-8	Fusion groove for a dominant chord
	1:07	10-9	Fusion groove over four strings on a dominant chord
60		10-10	Funk groove in a slap style
61	0:00	10-11	Funk groove for a dominant or minor tonality
	0:28	10-12	Funk groove using a major tonality
	0:57	10-13	Heavy funk groove using a minor tonality
	1:26	10-14	Heavy funk groove for a major or dominant tonality
	1:55	10-15	Fingerstyle funk for a minor or dominant tonality
	2:22	10-16	Fingerstyle funk using a major tonality
62	0:00	10-17	Hip-hop groove
	0:27	10-18	Hip-hop groove for a minor or dominant tonality
	0:53	10-19	Hip-hop groove for a major or dominant tonality
63		10-20	Generic funk groove and song
64	0:00	11-1	Bossa nova groove for a major, minor, or dominant chord
	0:19	11-2	Bossa nova groove for a half-diminished chord
65	0:00	11-3	Afro-Cuban groove for a major, minor, or dominant chord
	0:12	11-4	Afro-Cuban groove for a half-diminished chord
	0:18	11-5	Afro-Cuban groove with syncopation for a major, minor, or dominant chord
	0:42	11-6	Afro-Cuban groove with syncopation for a half-diminished chord

Track	*Time*	*Figure*	*Description*
66	0:00	11-7	Reggae groove for a minor chord
	0:31	11-8	Reggae groove for a major or dominant chord
	1:02	11-9	Reggae groove for a major, minor, or dominant chord
	1:20	11-10	Drop-one reggae groove for a major or dominant chord
	1:38	11-11	Drop-one reggae groove for a minor chord
67	0:00	11-12	Soca groove for a major or dominant chord
	0:19	11-13	Soca groove for a minor chord
	0:30	11-14	Soca groove for a major, minor, or dominant chord
68	0:00	11-15	Ska groove for a major, minor, or dominant chord
	0:16	11-16	Ska groove for a major or dominant chord
	0:37	11-17	Ska groove for a minor chord
69	0:00	11-18	South African groove for a major or dominant chord
	0:21	11-19	South African groove for a minor chord
	0:33	11-20	South African groove for a major, dominant, or minor chord
70		11-21	Generic world beat groove
71	0:00	12-1	Waltz accompaniment for major, minor, and dominant chords
	0:16	12-2	Waltz accompaniment for major, minor, and dominant chords
72	0:00	12-3 a	Grouping in 5/4 meter
	0:11	12-3 b	Three-two grouping in 5/4 meter
	0:22	12-3 c	Two-three grouping in 5/4 meter
	0:32	12-4	Groove in 5/4 meter for major, minor, and dominant chords
	0:44	12-5	Groove in 5/4 meter using a three-two grouping
	1:06	12-6	Groove in 5/4 using a two-three grouping
	1:29	12-7	Groove in 5/4 using sixteenth notes

Track	*Time*	*Figure*	*Description*
73	0:00	12-8 a	Grouping in 7/4 meter
	0:16	12-8 b	Three-two-two grouping in 7/4 meter
	0:27	12-8 c	Two-three-two grouping in 7/4 meter
	0:36	12-8 d	Two-two-three grouping in 7/4 meter
	0:46	12-9	Groove in a 7/4 meter for major, minor, and dominant chords
	1:01	12-10	Groove in 7/4 meter using a three-two-two grouping
	1:18	12-11	Groove in a 7/4 meter using a two-three-two grouping
	1:34	12-12	Groove in 7/4 meter using a two-two-three grouping
	1:50	12-13	Groove in 7/4 using sixteenth notes
74		12-14	Generic song in odd meter
75		13-2	A bass part in the pop genre
76		13-3	Rock bass part with a quarter-note groove skeleton
77		13-4	Rock bass part with a groove skeleton using two eighth notes
78		13-5	R & B/Soul bass part with a groove skeleton using two eighth notes
79		13-6	R & B/Soul bass part with a groove skeleton using a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note
80		13-7	Funk bass part with a groove skeleton using two sixteenth notes
81		13-8	Latin bass groove
82		13-9	Shuffle bass part
83		13-10	A blending groove
84		13-11	Bold groove
85		13-12	Sign-offs for a groove
86	0:00	19-1	Bass line in the style of Bootsy Collins
	0:15	19-2	Bass line in the style of Donald “Duck” Dunn
	0:28	19-3	Bass line in the style of James Jamerson
	0:54	19-4	Bass line in the style of John Paul Jones

Track	Time	Figure	Description
	1:11	19-5	Bass line in the style of Joe Osborn
	1:23	19-6	Bass line in the style of Jaco Pastorius
	1:43	19-7	Bass line in the style of George Porter, Jr.
	2:01	19-8	Bass line in the style of Francis Rocco Prestia
	2:20	19-9	Bass line in the style of Chuck Rainey
	2:45	19-10	Bass line in the style of Robbie Shakespeare

Troubleshooting

If you have trouble installing the items from the CD, please call the Customer Service phone number at 877-762-2974 (outside the U.S.: 317-572-3993) or visit `www.wiley.com/techsupport`. Wiley Publishing, Inc. will provide technical support only for installation and other general quality-control items.

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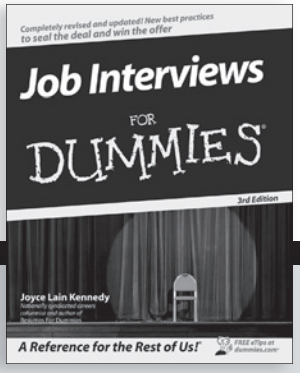

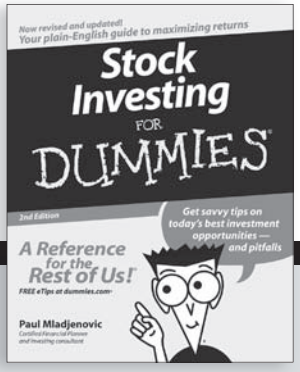

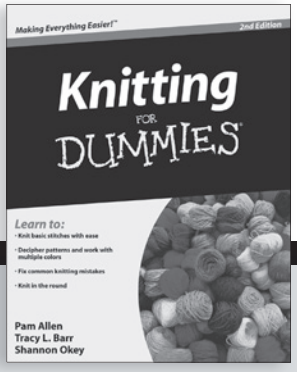

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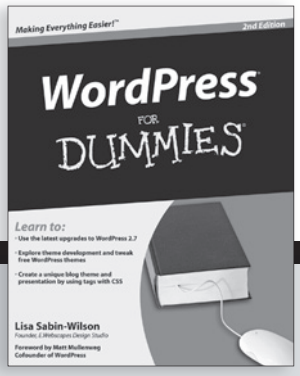

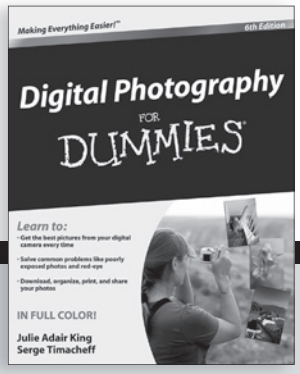

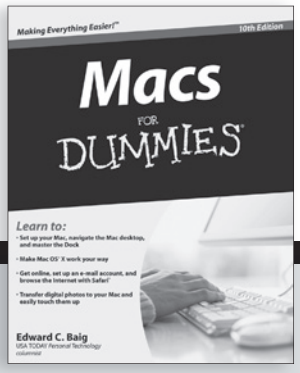

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